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# LADY AUBREY;

OR,

## WHAT SHALL I DO?

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'EVERY DAY,' &c.

"Fais ce que tu dois, advienne que pourra."

*Old French Proverb.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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# LADY AUBREY;

OR,

WHAT SHALL I DO?

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## CHAPTER I.

“For if on earth there be a tear  
From passion’s dross refined and clear,  
’Tis such as pious fathers shed  
Upon a duteous daughter’s head.”

SCOTT.

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“A MARRIAGE in high life at St. George’s, Hanover Square,” is an announcement which the imagination can easily follow; no particular description is necessary when the general arrangements on such occasions are so well known and so little varied by custom or in effect. The bridal train either entering by the principal door and nave, or through the vestry—the concourse of aristocracy attending the ceremony exciting attention from the splendour of their equipages, or other adventitious points attending their high position—the *beauty* of the scene in detail, consisting in the array of the ladies, the glistening effect of rich texture and colouring, the *interest* in the

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bride and bridegroom ;—perhaps we may include as attractive of that latter feeling the parents and near relations of the two persons who are about to take on themselves vows of reciprocal devotion “till death does them part.”

The families of each do, generally speaking, feel a great deal, and their emotions are strong, but few think of *them*. The outer crowd is “gazing on the throng,” and looking for the bridegroom in his carriage-and-four. The bride follows soon after, and with her train of bridesmaids meets her betrothed at the altar ; the service is read, then the marriage is attested ; the bride signs her maiden name for the last time ; with her bridegroom listens to and acknowledges the congratulations poured in upon them, then together side by side they leave the more solemn scene, and hasten on to that of festivity.

In most cases the observer can note little more, but it is our wont to go deeper ; and it would be impossible to pass by the marriage of Lord Edward and Lady Mary Capel without alluding more particularly to moments of such intense import to them. They interest us very much, and now, when they are taking such a step on the threshold of a new life, we naturally look on them more intently.

Lord Edward and his friends are ready in the vestry. He looks agitated, but replies to the com-

ments made on the auspicious state of the weather, and other casual matters, with apparent composure. He is placed at the altar, the bride is led in by her father, the sisters follow next in her train, and then the other six bridesmaids. She is very pale: the lace which so gracefully falls over her form cannot veil this evidence of recent emotion; but now she appears perfectly calm. She advances to the altar, and there, with the chosen of her heart, she kneels for a few moments. The ceremony begins.

In "prosperity or adversity" she is ready to commit the earthly keeping of her fate to him.

They exchange their mutual vows to "love and cherish" each other, whatever may betide them. Sickness, poverty, sorrow, may come, but together they will meet, if they cannot stem the torrent. They receive the "spiritual benediction" which lifts their throbbing hearts beyond this world, and, resolute to obey His Will, they believe that "under His protection they shall abide in His love unto their lives' end."

The rite is over. In the sight of God and man indissoluble bonds are between them.

Her new relations crowd round to embrace and welcome her. Leaning on her husband's arm, she retires to add her name to the pages which already bear so many. Ah! how many have tremblingly

traced those names, and have lived to mourn that they ever did so ! But there are no misgivings to agitate our gentle bride. She rises, and then one look she casts around ; the next moment, with her arms fondly clinging round her father's neck, she is fast locked in his embrace. "My child !" is all he utters ; and then, releasing her from his hold, he places her in the hands of him who is now more to her than even himself.

We must take yet another glance. On reaching the home she had so lately left, they are met and affectionately greeted by their revered grandmother. Now they turn to receive the group which followed them ; the sisters are clasped in each other's arms ; congratulations are reiterated by the assembled guests. The bride has no voice to utter her thanks ; there are tears in her soft eyes, and smiles on her lips. Lord Edward still looks agitated, but very happy.

Presently the circle seems to concentrate round the tables, which are covered with the costly and recherché bridal gifts : encomiums on their worth and beauty are heard ; although Aunt Susy "declares that she cannot imagine what the satisfaction can be of possessing so many utterly useless things."

Some young ladies are talking in animated strains about the bride's "lovely" trousseau, whilst others are discussing the bracelets and the diamonds.

Then follows the banquet, the speeches, the enthusiastic eulogies, on the bride and bridegroom, the universal testimony of all to the virtues and the glories of the noble houses now united; and the scene is bright, animated, and exhilarating.

Alas! it is all too sublunary to last! The traveling carriage is at the door. The bride must cast aside her myrtle and orange flowers. Again, after a short retirement, she re-appears, and again there are embraces and partings. Blessings are mingled with tears—"tears on a duteous daughter's head,"—from the remaining parent, who is yielding up the greatest solace of his days. And they are gone—

Gone to enter on a new path in life; their hearts full of sunshine, and that unutterable hope which springs from faith in each other, and trust in the love and mercy which has brought them together—the meek trust

"Of hearts that know no guile,  
That all around see all things bright  
With their own magic smile,  
The silent joy, that sinks so deep,  
Of confidence and rest."

"Mary has deputed us to take care of you, dearest papa; we will try all we can to be worthy of the trust—we cannot fill *her* place, we know that," and Selina's voice faltered.

"And you must please to take great care of your-

self, and to go to your room and rest now, papa," chimed in Gertrude, in a more cheerful tone. "We made so many promises to her, and we have settled that you really must do everything we bid you, so will you go now?"

Lord Acton smiled, and saying something about "Imperious little tyrants," he went to the sofa. Clara, who with Mr. Colville had joined the sisters after the departure of the bride and bridegroom, had a great deal to say to her Rose-buds, and various comments to make on the passing scene.

Selina was looking too much flushed, and Gertrude some shades too pale, for her full enjoyment of her blush-roses, and they were to promise her two or three things. First, that they would remain as quiet as they could after all the people were gone, for they must remember that there was to be a family *réunion* that very evening, which might keep them up late. Secondly, they were to let her have the first tidings they received of dear Lady Mary and her Lord. Thirdly, they were to engage themselves to pass the whole of that day week with her at the Hermitage at R——.

"If papa can spare us," said Selina.

"And," added Gertrude, "if we have time; you know how much we shall have to do now."

"Important, consequential little bud!" said Clara.

"But really, dear Lady Aubrey, if we are to be to papa what Mary was, we must do a great many things; you can't think how very busy she always was. One of the first matters she had to get through every day was reading all his private letters to him, then answering them; then seeing Turner about the affairs at Shenstone, looking over accounts, and quantities of things besides. Selina and I must take it in turns to fill her place. I know I shall be very stupid at first."

"I see you will have full occupation."

"Yes, indeed."

There was a pause, and then Clara added, "I was just thinking that it would be quite impossible for Lord Acton to look forward to sparing you, when you are a maid-of-honour."

"Ah, dear Lady Aubrey, you are laughing at me, and yet, as papa says, it is a laudable ambition of mine, and a very natural one too. So delightful to be in attendance on our dear Queen; he does not wonder that I wished for anything so charming, but he says it is impossible that it should ever happen, because Her Majesty does not bestow the privilege on earls' daughters. She made one exception, and only one that he can remember, and that was in Lady C—— C——'s case. She was a very charming person, papa says. Oh no, I have no chance; *that*

vision of future greatness has vanished, the illusion has quite passed away."

Just at this moment a trio of Guardsmen, friends of Lord Edward's, claimed the attention of Clara and her buds; and Lady Susan was heard replying, in a clear and decided tone, to a lady who had remarked that "she felt very much for Lord Acton, he would miss Lady Mary so much," that she could not see *that* at all. "My mother means to be here as much as possible, so do I; I flatter myself we shall be able to fill the blank you talk of; and as to Mary, she will be of more use now than ever as a chaperon to her sisters. Gertrude is to be presented soon, and my mother is not equal to going into society as much as you may be sure so giddy a creature will desire. *I* cannot bear going out, so Mary will be of some use in that way."

"Lady Susan does not seem particularly fond of her nieces," was the remark made soon after.

"She is difficult to please then," was the rejoinder.

The guests dispersed, and the host retired into his private room. For a moment or two we will intrude on him. His first act was to open a case on his table, and look at it for some time; it contained a picture, on which he gazed with deep emotion: a very lovely young creature, with a child in her arms, was the subject.

“Both my Marys, both gone; so like each other, so lovely, so perfect. My first, my angel wife, I shall meet again ere long; our separation will be over! reunion with her! why do I droop with such a hope in my breast? I am weak. Then losing my second Mary, what a wrench it is! Oh, she little knows what it has cost me to give her up, and yet I ought to rejoice that Edward Capel has claimed my treasure. I do believe he is worthy of her, and people congratulate me; they are right—I must think of *her* gain, and then I shall forget my own loss. A loss indeed! I see her now, as she came to me that day when I was smitten and desolate, how she tried in her sweet, gentle, loving way to soothe my anguish, to bind up my broken heart; to lure me to take interest in the blessings which were still left me, how gently she led me to the ‘still waters’ of consolation, and when I could bear no one else near me, and shrunk from every other human voice, how she told of her own young ardent love for me; and then in her simple way led me to look upwards and to dwell on the surpassing joy of my angel one. Oh Mary! Mary! and art thou gone from me to another home? I am not selfish, and then I know, although it is not my habit to speak of my most sacred thoughts, that there is that within my heart

which will sustain me. I am not alone ; He is with me, I shall not be left desolate."

"May I come in, papa ? I want to see if you are resting, and being good," and Gertrude put her little hand caressingly on her father's shoulder. She saw he had been weeping, and that he could not reply to her.

"Dearest papa—"

There was silence for a moment or two, and then he said—"I will rest now, my dear child, but on condition that you do too, and that you make Selina do the same, or, perhaps, what would be still better, that you should go together and take a little drive."

She promised, and they parted.

"Poor, dear, darling papa, he has been crying over their pictures—mamma's and Mary's, that one of Mary when she was quite little, and dear mamma so young and beautiful ; I don't wonder, I know I can never look at it."

"It is not good for him," replied Selina. "What was he doing when you left him ?"

"He was trying to rest ; I made him shut his eyes, and I pulled down the blinds, and the room was quite dark enough. I think he will be better before dinner."

A drive into the Park was decided on by the sisters, and something was added about wearing their bridal bonnets—"They *were* so pretty."

So were the wearers, in the opinion of every lounger in Rotten Row.

“If I had never known anything better, how very pretty I should think this place! It will be beautiful in a few weeks; but I must not get into the habit of comparing the past and the present. I see that won’t do. My thoughts will keep wandering to other scenes, and I can’t help feeling Edgar’s absence. He must be away a great deal more from me than he used to be; I believe this is what makes me so dejected; but here comes mamma—I must rouse myself—poor mamma, how well she bears everything!”

Thus was Clara speaking her thoughts three or four days after the retirement of the family to R——. She had been actively employed for the first two in arranging her rooms; but now came the reaction. It had been settled that Sir Edgar was to have apartments in town, in case his duties at the House detained him late at any time. The affairs of the bank had been wound up, but much of perplexity still remained, the fugitive clerk had not been traced, and the *bad debts*, which amounted to many thousands, were likely to remain so. The claims of Colville and Aubrey were little regarded, redress seemed beyond *their* reach, and there appeared to be as yet no appeal.

Mr. Colville looked worn, and at times exhausted, but the harassed expression which had been so perceptible for months had disappeared.

There is something very touching in the meek, subdued spirit, the last lingering effects of care and anxiety, the patient, uncomplaining endurance of sorrow! The silvery hairs, the drooping eye, the hollow cheek, how much they tell of the past!

Truly if it were not that the blessed hopes which are engendered by our Faith shine out more and more brightly as the earthly clouds which weigh us down to earth disappear, we should well nigh sink under the sweeping storms and tempests of this life. There are moments of frailty when cares for the *Perishable* shut out the *Imperishable* from our sight; but to those who trust in *Eternal* Wisdom, and know that "all is well" that comes by *His* sanction, there are wings given which waft them to the very gates of Heaven, whilst the spell-bound victims to the harrowing turmoils of this life mourn in continual fretfulness and repinings over the blighted prospects which in their desolation make this scene too truly to them the "*vale of tears.*"

## CHAPTER II.

"It cannot be too soon: for I am weary  
Of the bewildering masquerade of life,  
Where strangers walk as friends, and friends as strangers;  
Where whispers overheard betray false hearts;  
And through the mazes of the crowd we chase  
Some form of loveliness, that smiles, and beckons,  
And cheats us with fair words, only to leave  
A mockery and a jest; maddened—confused,  
Not knowing friend from foe."

*Spanish Student.*

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"Is it really necessary that I should go to this party to-night, and that I should accept all these invitations?" was Clara's address to Sir Edgar at breakfast, after ruminating for some minutes, and turning over several cards which were on the table.

"I think so, certainly. To what do you object?"

"Oh, it is all so different now! Then the long drive, it makes one's dress look so *chiffonnée*."

"That is an objection, I suppose; still, with management, you might sit for more than an hour and a half without being *crumpled*."

"Ah, I see you can't understand; men never do. Well, then, supposing I were to get over that, don't

you think that being here and not in town is sufficient excuse ? ”

“ If you wish to make excuses—”

“ Not excuses exactly ; besides to some places I might like to go, and then it would be awkward. Mamma won’t listen to me when I talk of staying at home with her and papa, and threatens to go to the sea-coast if I do ; so I can’t insist on that : only, as I said before, it is all so different now.”

“ I don’t see the great difference.”

“ Don’t you ? Why, for instance, we cannot return invitations, we cannot give dinner-parties, and balls and fêtes, as we used to do.”

“ I do not imagine that people wish you to do so : my opinion is that they are too happy to have such an adornment to their parties as my pretty Clara on any terms. It would be the worst thing in the world for you, with your own lively appreciation of all that is pleasant and attractive, to turn your back on society ; and you know no one can make their own terms with the world ; we must either go *where* we are asked and *when* we are asked, or we must retire entirely ; half-measures don’t do in such matters.”

“ But, then, you can’t always go with me, you say.”

“ Not always, but I hope to do so frequently ; and

then you have such hosts of friends, so many intimates, and such an innumerable list of acquaintances; you would find it unnatural to give them all up, and I should very much lament your doing so; I wish you to go into society for my sake as well as your own: so to please me, dearest, you will go?"

"To please you, you know I would go to the Antipodes!"

"Well, in this case, you see you need not go so far."

Clara, in obeying Sir Edgar's will, followed the dictates of her own inclination to a certain degree. It was not natural to her who had hitherto been so popular to shrink from circles which were attractive to her, and where she knew she was admired. Why the idea that she would be less valued in them now that she was stripped of the gorgeous trappings of wealth and splendour, had entered her mind, was still to be accounted for. "Second sight," she called it; "All nonsense," Sir Edgar said it was; and her father and mother added, "It will be a bad sign of the world if it is so."

Wonderful it seems to *us*, with our eyes wide open, and on the "qui vive" to discover blemishes, as *readers* (alas, for *writers*!) generally are, that they don't see what Clara means. Sir Edgar, young as he was, might, if he had been commonly observant, have

seen that his riches had hitherto given effect to every measure he proposed, and that as an M.P., a J.P., and Deputy-Lieutenant for the county, he held a position with which wealth was consistent and a matter of course, for poor men are not brought into such prominent places. He was guileless to an extreme, and too noble in his own nature to think less well of people because fortune did not smile on them. He only spoke the truth when he said, "I cannot imagine why you should be less esteemed because our income is now calculated by hundreds instead of thousands." One thing Clara discovered, and that was that one pair of carriage horses would not do.

"On the days of which the evenings are devoted to London I cannot take mamma and the boy out to drive, because the coachman says it can't well be managed: that if he does not save the horses in the morning, they cannot possibly do the night-work. Now I suppose we can't afford two pair; so I was thinking, as you never can ride with me now, that Selim had better be sold, and then we can have a pony and carriage, in which I could drive mamma, and sometimes we could put the boy and nurse behind."

This was agreed to.

The next difficulty was—"Pheemy has no talent

for arranging hair ; I don't know how to dress it myself : how I miss Elise ! ”

Mrs. Colville suggested that Dalton should try to officiate in that matter.

Clara smiled incredulously.

Dalton did try, and Clara was *coifféd à merveille*.

It was something to see the little evils of her every day life disperse so easily.

Whenever Lady Aubrey appeared as one of a group which invariably excited pleased attention, when she joined the Duchess of B——, or was one of “the Bromley set,” or in the character of chaperon to Lady Selina Elton, or, in fact, was brought forward by the notice and evident intimacy of any of the distinguished persons with whom she associated, she had no reason to complain of the want of *empressement* in the manner with which she was received. She almost began to think that she had been mistaken.

It happened that, during the Easter recess, the friends we have alluded to were all absent from town. Sir Edgar had more leisure just at that time (being liberated from his Parliamentary duties for a few days) to go out with Clara, and she was so pleased with that circumstance that she did not at first observe that now the lustre reflected from the Duchess, &c. &c. was withdrawn she was not quite so enthusiastically greeted ; the “dear Lady Aubreys” were

not so emphatic or so frequent, the expressions of delight at seeing her not quite so ecstatic. Still she noted not the change. She did remark that the "privilege of her acquaintance" was not so eagerly sought as it had been ; so many people had begged for introductions ; illustrious foreigners and others had distinguished her by making known their compatriots to her ; her notice had been requested so humbly for the *débutantes* of the season, her patronage for the rising genius of the day, and her "distinguished favour" for all who were aspiring in their nature, that hitherto her embarrassment had been how to meet every demand. Now it was different ; none of these things seemed required from her. Still she did not heed the alteration ; her attention was absorbed by what interested her most, and her eyes were generally wandering to the groups Sir Edgar joined, and where all seemed pleased to see him. It struck her once or twice that there was an air of patronage in the manner of some of the elder men towards him, but he did not seem aware of any peculiarity, and she did not point out what annoyed her.

When she went alone, her impression that it was "very disagreeable" to do so increased every evening ; but still she acted in accordance with the wishes of others, and not to please herself ; and therefore she could not retreat. When her "Rose-bud" was with

her—and that was very often, for to meet the Eltons was a great inducement, and carried her through what she confessed was often irksome and inconvenient—she tried to repress her susceptibility to ennui, and to take a general interest in the scenes around her. Although her individual enjoyment was immensely abated, and often she felt weary and dispirited, yet the illusion that there was a charm in such scenes was not quite dispelled. Gradually as the conviction was stealing over her that the world did not lavish admiration on her as it had once done, she fancied that it was the fault of her own preconceived opinions, more than the real fact, which was creating the feeling, and therefore she checked it as often as she could.

One evening, at a ball given at the —— Embassy, where Edgar had promised to join her, and to which she went as her “Rose-bud’s” chaperon (the elder sister being still absent from town), she felt something more than impatience, because the hours were passing away and still his name was not announced. She was actually disgusted to find herself sitting alone whilst her charge was dancing, and as utterly unnoticed as if she had been a stranger in the circle which surrounded her. In the frame of mind naturally induced by her position she was morbidly sensitive to what she was now convinced were slights

and intentional discourtesies, and perhaps it was this which made her shrink from Mrs. Westerham when she stopped in passing her, and said—

“Ah, Lady Aubrey, are you here! I have not seen you for an age!”

“We met last week at D—— House, I think,” was Clara’s rejoinder.

“Ah, true, so we did; you are not in town now, I find.”

“No, we are at R——.”

“Awkward for Sir Edgar, is it not?”

“He has a *pied à terre* at St. James’s, and is as little in town as he can help.”

“Is he fond of R——?”

“Very.”

“You give your fêtes there?”

“We did give them.”

“I do not remember having seen you any night this season at the Opera.”

“I have no box.”

“And your house in —— Square is sold?”

“It is.”

Mrs. Vernon joined the speakers, with a younger lady leaning on her arm; and after a few sentences was turning to go, when Clara observed that her companion made an attempt to detain her, but they moved a little aside, and then she distinctly heard

the young lady say, "You promised to introduce me; pray do."

"It is not worth while; I will tell you why presently."

And then followed a long communication, in tones which, even through the music of Jullien's band, penetrated to Clara's ears.

"They are useless now; used to give balls, fêtes—ruined. I wonder at her persisting in appearing in society," &c.

"Last year I remember you were longing to know her, and got introduced through the Stormonts; why don't you like her now?"

"Silly child! it was the fashion; and they were splendidly rich then, gave charming parties, and all that sort of thing."

"I should like to know her, she is such a lovely person."

"Do you think so?"

"To be sure; don't you?"

"No; she is not what she was."

They passed on; Edgar appeared, and in time Clara and he found themselves in the supper-room, and standing before a set of people whose voices Clara thought she recognised as belonging to Sir James and Lady Guernsey, and their daughter.

"I thought I saw Lady Aubrey just now," said

Lady G——; “but it could not be; she would hardly, after all that has happened, come into such scenes as these.”

“Why not? I dare say neither she nor Aubrey feel for the calamities of those they have involved; they are well enough off themselves, depend upon it.”

“Oh, papa, I heard that Mr. Colville and Sir Edgar had behaved so beautifully, and given up all, or nearly all, they possessed,” said Miss Guernsey.

“All humbug, my dear!”

“Indeed, I believe it is quite true; Horace says so.”

“He is easily taken in; I give them credit for nothing of the sort.”

“I assure you he, and others too, say that they have acted in the noblest way, and that they have very little left to live on.”

“Then they have no business here.”

“Her diamonds are the finest in the room.”

“That may be.”

“I know that they have given up all their servants—at least a great many; for that French maid mamma is thinking of was with Lady Aubrey, and Horace saw all the grand horses and carriages sold: in fact they have given up almost everything.”

“I don’t believe Edgar Aubrey is such a fool; but move on.”

Clara felt her arm pressed, and then her husband said, "Who are those people who are discussing us and our fallen fortunes? Do I know them? Shall I refute them? It would be a pity not to set the man right;" and he half turned round, but she checked the action. "He is too contemptible: let him say what he likes. I know the girl's voice, but I am not quite sure of the name. Let us go back to the ball-room: Gertrude's quadrille must be over by this time."

"If you don't move on, you won't reach the supper-table to-night. What a crowd there is!" next issued from the Guernsey lips.

Lady Aubrey's matronly wing was ready to shelter her charge just at the right moment, and there was something contagious in the brightness beaming from the latter, which made Clara impervious to what at another time she would have thought Mrs. Vernon's impertinence.

"Lady Aubrey, as you are fond of music, I will get you invited to Lady S——'s *matinée musicale* for Thursday next. Where shall I send the tickets?"

"Thank you, not anywhere; I declined Lady S—— last week."

"Oh! well, I didn't know; I thought you might not have been invited."

To this Clara made no reply; but seeing a couple

advancing as she fancied towards her (although in point of fact they were making their way to Lady G. Elton), she stepped forward. The said pair were eager in their expressions of delight at seeing Lady Gertrude, and were longing to know how dear Lord Acton was, &c. &c. ; but hardly responded to Clara's salutations, and then left her abruptly.

"I think we must go now : are you ready, my rosebud?" And presently they were, after depositing their charge, driving swiftly on the road to R——.

"Well, I must say I have had enough of this sort of thing. Are not you quite satisfied too, Edgar? Don't you see how utterly contemptible what is called *the world* is—how false, how full of treachery and deceit, hollow in friendship, despicable in feeling? I cannot find words to express my disgust, my utter abhorrence of the duplicity, hypocrisy, and abject worthlessness of the persons I was once blind and weak enough to look upon as friends—friends indeed!"

"We have certainly not met with agreeable specimens this evening ; but all are not so bad, I suppose."

"I know few exceptions—our own immediate friends, Bromleys, Eltons, Lord Acton, the Courtenays, the Duchess of B——, and even Miss Ashton (Britannia, as the Verneys always call her now)—I *will* exempt from my censure ; but no others. Those odious Westerhams, that servile sycophant Mrs. Ver-

non, the very persons who courted us so, who went further than most people in their display of affection, daring to patronize me! I knew that the Vernons were thorough people of the world, from some traits Mrs. Spencer gave me of them; and how often she (who is always on some errand of mercy, you know, and who ought to be respected by every one) was refused admittance till I lent her my carriage, and then she effected an entrance (out of compliment to that, she declared) when her sole object was to interest them in people who needed their patronage, and who had claims on them of various sorts. Oh! Edgar, I do hate those specious, pitiful parasites who worship the rising sun, and turn their backs on you as soon as the glory reflected by wealth is on the decline; and can you wonder?"

"No; I cannot say I do. I am sorry, though, to see you excited; it is not good for you, dearest."

"Excited! it is enough to excite one indeed, and to stir up all the evil of one's nature; and yet I am only indignant at what you yourself must confess is despicable."

"So despicable that you shall never be asked by me to expose yourself to it; but we are at home now—you shall do as you like for the future, my Clara."

One of Lady Aubrey's practical proofs that she thought of others with consideration was that she

never allowed any maid to sit up for her at night. She was soon unrobed, and required little assistance ; she could untwist and comb her own hair, and then she sat with her beautiful tresses uncoiled, and hanging in rich luxuriance over her shoulders, her face still looking flushed with recent emotion, her eyes still flashing with indignation.

“ I despise myself for being so easily duped, for trusting so implicitly in such people ; I ought to have known better. I have over estimated myself too. I little suspected that it was my glittering wealth which attracted them. Lately I have tried to accustom myself to expect some change, I could not define what ; but not this utter turpitude in those I have always hitherto found so pleasing, so courteous, so ready to caress me and to make me feel that they delighted in my society. Thank goodness, I am disenchanted now ! How I used to like that Mrs. Shaw, and how often I used to prove my affection for her in numbers of ways ! How much devotion she professed for me ! and to-night she was evidently unwilling to recognise me. It is very, very bad ; I could not have believed it, and I am so sorry that my dear, noble Edgar should be wounded ; and yet it is as well, perhaps, that we should both see for ourselves what the world really is. I thought I had so many friends—I trusted them so.”

And tears rose to her beautiful eyes.

“It is hard at my age to be forced to see that there was no reality in what I prized. All, all delusion on my part. I wish I could rise above it! I once thought I could; but this is beyond my imagination.”

She sat for some time, looking the picture of grief; then suddenly she said—“I know it is all good for me—all meant to drive me to the only real shelter from every earthly trouble. I ought to be glad that anything does that, and not to shrink in this way. What are those lines in my dear ‘Vox Cordis?’—

‘When gathering clouds around I view,  
And days are dark, and friends are few,  
On Him I lean who, not in vain,  
Experienced every human pain.’

And then again it goes on—

‘If wounded love my bosom swell,  
Deceiv’d by those I prized so well,  
He shall His pitying aid bestow  
Who felt on earth severer woe.’”

She soon after fell asleep, and in her nightly vision took a retrospect of scenes which she would fain have forgotten; but there she was, at one time gliding down a slippery path which led her amongst a group of persons who derided her, and turned away with a mocking laugh when she approached them. She

flew from them, but could not gain a footing on the mountain before her; her steps gave way, and she felt with horror that there was a yawning gulf behind her, and a deep chasm before her. In her despair she made a spring, when lo, arms were stretched out to save her. She saw her parents, Edgar, and her little one, looking eagerly for her. Another plunge and she was safe.

## CHAPTER III.

“L’active fécondité de notre imagination a besoin d’une base, et c’est dans le passé qu’elle aime à la prendre.”

DOUHATRE.

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THE Hermitage was situated at the extremity of R—— Park, one of those royal demesnes which adorn our land, and make us feel that thoughtful foresight for the recreation of their subjects has filled the minds of our rulers from time to time, and, therefore, claims from us loyalty and love.

R—— Park was a favourite haunt of Clara’s. There she walked, there she drove, and there, too, with Edgar at her side, she had ridden when Selim was her own. She could muse there without fear of interruption, and many a resolution for the future had she formed under the far-spreading branches of the magnificent trees which adorn it. She had strolled out, to do as Mrs. Colville recommended, and to “refresh herself after the fatigues of the preceding night,” and was bending her steps towards one of her favourite haunts, when a messenger followed her with a note from her neighbour, Mrs. de

Vere, which arrested and then altered her course, for she desired him to say that "she would have the pleasure of calling in the course of the afternoon, and, therefore, would not write any reply at that moment."

Quite at the other end of the park there was a house, situated so near the boundary of it that the bow window on one side could command the whole scene with its rich leafy luxuriance and bright verdure, and that scene was one which you could not gaze on without becoming imperceptibly affected by its grandeur, and the dignified repose which pervaded it—"Something which," as Mrs. de Vere said, "made her forget the world and all its turmoils, whilst it raised her thoughts far above the horizon which bounded her view when she looked upwards." On the other side of this residence, which had evidently been built nearly a century, there was a window of similar proportions and form, that took in a very different view. The busy world obtruded itself on your attention, whether you liked it or not: you could not fail to notice that occupation about the things of this world was, for the time, the paramount interest of the passers by. The aspect of the town and the various equipages which were traversing the road, the sprinkling of foot-passengers, and the eager looks of those who were bending their steps towards the

shops which had put out their most attractive lures, and were enticing the beholders by the brilliant display of colours, and their most striking arrangements of the useful and ornamental, led you at once from the "pleasures of imagination" and plunged you into the *realities* of life and its passing interests.

Here lived Mr. and Mrs. de Vere. The latter used to say "From my favourite seat, which is near the bow on the side which looks into the park, I can dwell in undisturbed repose upon the *past* and the *future*; on the other side of the house I can only look out on the *present*. I feel myself still a denizen of the world, which I would fain forget, but which has yet work for my wearied spirit and expiring energies to do—work which must be done."

And one could easily realize what she meant; the contrast was one which forced the analogy on your mind. My readers will follow me when I say it was like the early dawn and the closing day of life; activity, energy, elasticity; the strength of man, and his almost endless routine of business, unceasing toil, unwearied zeal in the pursuit which absorbed him; all the force of physical and mental power thrown in to aid the efforts made in the acquisition of possessions which were the desires of his heart; toil, toil, never-ending, ever-beginning toil, whilst there was light to guide the eager eye, or strength

to give impetus to the willing feet, were brought in evidence before you, as you looked on the busy market-town of R——, which is close to the confines of the park. Then again, you could not turn your contemplations towards the latter without carrying on the ideas brought before you by its imagery. The deep shadows contrasting with the occasional bright gleams which flashed before you when the lights were fitful in their radiance ; the even, unvaried colouring at one time, the calm, still, saddened expression cast by the fading light at another ; then the peaceful quietude, the tranquil repose, which stole over you as the shadows deepened in their hues, and at last resolved themselves into one mass of darkness, bringing out as it were in strong relief the greyer shades of that canopy of heaven, which, by degrees, prepared the eye to look on the dazzling beauty of the stars, and then to follow them in spirit to the realms of light and glory.

These were the two worlds Mrs. de Vere lived in.

Clara took great pleasure in the society of both Mr. and Mrs. de Vere. It was such a comfort to her, when her spirits drooped, to go to the latter and unburden herself from the weight which oppressed her. She knew she should meet with sympathy, and with what she needed more still, counsel, wise, judicious advice, which would be administered so gently

and yet with such truthful sincerity that there was nothing, even in her mutable nature or sensitive spirit, which could revolt against it.

We have seen how variable Clara was; how her mood at one moment was to bear and forbear, at another to resist and to resent.

Passive endurance, under the discipline of inaction, was not easy to her nature: "Give me something to do, something to bear for those I love, and I don't feel afraid of sinking. It is this change from a stirring life in the world and for the world, to the utter inactivity, the 'far niente' of my present one, which tires me; mamma wants so little, papa and Edgar are still so occupied in thought by the past, that I hardly like to disturb them by talking to them; little Edgar is not old enough to teach, my domestic cares are so light with Dalton at the head of affairs, and my uselessness is so apparent, even to myself, that I can hardly endure it."

It certainly was a very different life.

Once the centre of attraction, as we have seen; the admired, the fêted, the caressed, the eagerly sought after, the almost idolized possessor of beauty, grace, and boundless wealth—how pleasant to her to feel her influence, to see that wherever she turned she was met with welcomes, smiles, and approbation!

And now, in her still unimpaired loveliness, with

all the indefinable attractions shed over her by the charms of youth, with all the graces acquired by education and cultivation, the position which her birth entitled her to, and the rank her husband had endowed her with, she was, as it were, cast aside. No wonder that she was perplexed, and that she burst out with—

“The world ! ’tis but a synonym for change.”

At one time her eyes and senses might have been dazzled, they were now rudely opened, and so suddenly, that her imperfect vision could not take in the prospect before her ; there were clouds everywhere which obscured her view when she endeavoured to look on the bright side.

“If I could but forget the heartless faithlessness of those I used to trust so implicitly, I could raise my mind from what is so debasing, so abject and odious, and then, perhaps, I should discover what you say there is still in the world (remember, by the *world* I only mean the least worthy of those we mingle with) ; for *you*, for instance, I should say were *not* of this world, any more than the dear Eltons and Bromleys and my paragon Duchess are. You say there is much to beguile us out of our admiration and reverence, if we looked with unprejudiced eyes, and I must believe you still—still.”

With this tinge of censure and tone of deprecation Clara used to unburden her mind to Mrs. de Vere, and then the meek, long suffering, disciplined spirit used to reply—

“I do not wonder at your reprobation of what must strike your own open, trusting nature so forcibly; but it will do you no good, my dear child, to dwell on the errors of others: the best thing for you now is to see how zealously, how perfectly, you can perform the duties which are appointed you under your present phase of existence; it will be a much more ennobling life than the one you have described to me as that which you have hitherto led. There is so much in your lot that seems to me to make it a very happy one, that I cannot bear to see you shutting your eyes on all that is so felicitous, and dwelling as you do on what has been adverse to your tastes and wishes.”

“But you don’t understand, dear Mrs. de Vere: it is not that I am discontented; indeed I am not *that*; it is only that I am so shocked at what facts have revealed to me. You know when I speak now of the hollowness of the world, I do so from my own experience; and that experience has not come upon me by degrees, but in such a startling way, taking me by surprise and finding me utterly unprepared.”

“I can see all that; it is only natural that you should feel shocked, but it is better for you to look

forward than to cast your thoughts on the past; I have seen so many who have suffered from doing so, when that past afforded a contrast to the present, such as, in many cases, it does. Although we live out of society now, and confine our interests to a narrow limit, comparatively speaking, I assure you we hear and know of many troubles which we can to a degree alleviate, and the occupation of doing so shuts out the painful past more effectually than anything else. There are Mr. and Mrs. Bernard, with their large family, just hurled, as it were, from wealth to poverty, I cannot tell you how they interest us. Mr. de Vere is doing all he can to find situations for the elder sons, and I rather expect he will succeed, and that will be a great satisfaction to us. All sorts of plans have been thought of for the five daughters, who were ready, poor things, to do everything and anything, and it is settled they are all to stay at home; the three elder ones would have offered themselves as governesses, rather than have been a burden to their parents, but I am glad to say that idea has been given up. It was quite touching to hear them pleading and entreating for permission to do what they all in secret shrunk from. I have seen so much of them of late, indeed ever since their total loss of fortune—so much of the detail of their lives, that I believe no subject comes before me now

with such force and interest as their daily, hourly struggles."

"I heard of them from Mrs. Spencer, and I fancied that they were growing from some cause or other easier in their circumstances."

"Only easier because their minds are becoming more habituated to the portion allotted them; I do not think there has been any other relief sent them."

"Do you think I could be of any use to them? I should feel it quite a privilege to be allowed to lessen their distresses."

"I will think about it and tell you. I have no doubt that you might be a great comfort to them, poor things; their tastes are so refined, and their habits, up to the present time, had been so naturally in keeping with their position, that there are many things which now must be beyond their reach, and which still it would be a great comfort to one to bestow on them."

"I could lend them books and new music, and I am sure mamma, even although she does not like visiting, would go to see Mrs. Bernard. If you could only think of something I could do for them, I should be so glad."

"I will with pleasure. The elder girls are very accomplished, and are now to take the entire charge of the younger ones, as far as education goes; but I

am sure you will feel for them as I did, when I tell you that manual labour even comes within the category of their duties. Two are to teach, and the third daughter, who is not so strong mentally as the others, will employ herself in active house work, literally house work. They used to have one of the fullest establishments, now they are reduced to two maid-servants. There was a difficulty in getting two that could and would do all that devolved on them; it was one which increased daily; so Julia, whose health will not bear so well as that of the other sisters sedentary employment, is to be the active one. She stipulates for the assistance of a Frottoir, that is all. There is nothing undignified in this line of conduct, quite the contrary; I admire her very much. There is an utter abnegation of self in the first place, and an exalted sense of duty in the second; and then there is that beautiful submission to the will of Him Who has permitted these reverses to fall on them which always excites our admiration."

"And our emulation too," said Clara.

After a little pause, she added, "Their house is very large; I almost wonder that they continue in it."

"They have it rent free, for it belongs to Mrs. Bernard's brother, and it is convenient in situation, as one of the sons is now employed in some office

connected with the railroad ; so is the father. He has in his old age resumed the labours from which he had retired, and has taken the only situation he could get. They mean to let the under-part of their house ; you might, perhaps, help them to get a tenant."

"I will, certainly ; I will tell Edgar about it too ; he is more likely to be of use to them, for I do not mean to be much in town for the future. But won't that plan be a very disagreeable one to them all ? Having strangers in the same house will be odious, I should think."

"Why you see they are not now in a position to indulge their inclinations : 'necessity knows no law.' The house is large, and will admit of that sort of arrangement ; and, after all, it is only what Italian princes do."

"Still I can't imagine anything much more disagreeable."

At this moment Mrs. Morton, a relation of Mrs. de Vere's, who was paying her a visit of some weeks, came into the room, and the strain of conversation became different.

The intruder did not stay long, and after she left them Clara remarked—

"I am sorry to see that Mrs. Morton does not look one shade more cheerful than she did last year ; how

sad her widowed state is! She must have been devoted as a wife, for she cannot conceal her unvarying depression, I could almost call it gloominess."

"Ah, she is, indeed, gloomy and wretched! Shall I tell you why? Perhaps it may do you good to know that there are greater miseries than those of discovering the hollowness of the world, as you have done, my dear child—far greater sorrows than any you have yet known, or, indeed, are ever likely to know. Poor Dora is a victim to regret: *her* past is full of misery and self-condemnation, the source of unavailing lamentations, reproach, and remorse."

"How dreadful! What could she have done?—you quite frighten me."

"She abused the gifts of Providence, turned the blessings bestowed on her into misfortunes, shipwrecked her own happiness and that of those most closely bound to her, by perpetually militating against every power which opposed her tastes or will, never submitting to control, and never giving up one desire of her heart to the wishes of those who had a claim on all she could yield to them. Temper of the most imperious nature, the harshest, most unamiable disposition I ever met with."

"It struck me that she looked unhappy and imperturbably grave, but I did not discover the darker

shades of ill temper—more a broken-hearted expression and a sort of look which seems to imply ‘I won’t be comforted, so you need not try.’”

“I see what you mean, and it is very much the case with her; she won’t listen to comfort; not that one can offer much to people who bring all their afflictions on their own heads. Hers is a frightful case; she had so many blessings lavished on her, and if it had not been for her vile temper she might have been so happy. She was a spoiled child; that is some excuse for her, poor thing!”

“Perhaps what is called bad temper might have been constitutional in her case, and could have been cured in her childhood.”

“It might, but it was not; she domineered over everybody. You see how handsome she is still. At one time she was beautiful in everything but expression. She had a large fortune, and considerable talents; all her gifts were great. When Sidney Morton became attached to her, people wondered at his blindness, for every one was afraid of her; his temerity was something I never could account for. He saw that she had no friends, but he fancied she was fastidious, and only felt the more flattered at her distinction of himself. He was told of her glaring faults, warned that she would tyrannize over him, but was bold in his daring, intrepid in his nature, and I

believe expected to be a Petruchio to his Kate. But alas ! Captain Morton soon discovered his mistake ! Her undisciplined nature would not bend, and the warfare between the married couple began almost immediately. He had been a widower for three years when he was first penetrated and then utterly enthralled by Dora's beauty and her various accomplishments. He had one little girl of four years old, and one of his hopes was that his little Helen would gain from her second mother the advantages of education which he valued so highly. Unfortunately the child was not pretty or attractive, and soon became a subject of discord between them, and for the sake of peace Captain Morton sent her to one of her mother's relations. This was a great blow to him, one of the first and fondest of his illusions gone. They had one son, a most engaging-looking creature; but Dora contrived to make him a source of misery. She was unnatural, harsh, severe. On one occasion little Percy, dreading her anger and its results, ran away from home, and was found in a cottage, where he had taken refuge, and where two persons were ill of fever. The poor child caught the infection and died. Captain Morton was almost maddened by grief. He had been on half-pay, but, after some frightful scenes with his wife, and altercations of the most painful nature, he sent in an application to be

put on full service, and was accepted. He told her that 'she was driving him from his home, and perhaps to his grave ; that long and patiently as he had borne her temper, he could endure it no longer.' He had, I was told, been the most forbearing of husbands, but human nature could not contend for ever. She replied to him with bitterness, and he joined his regiment, was ordered out to the Crimea, and fell.

"She has never known peace since ; remorse, repentance when it was too late, regrets, and self-reproaches, which are aggravated ten thousandfold when she looks back and remembers his forbearance and her own rebellion, gnaw away her peace ; she is never able to divert her thoughts from the dark passages of her life, never able to forget that she might have been perfectly happy in her home if she had not indulged in irritation, perpetual ill humour, and discontent. I pity her intensely, and wish most earnestly that I could soothe her. I have tried to show her that the penitent are never cast off when they plead in deep humility to the one Great Intercessor for their pardon ; and I believe she knows this, but she always says, ' As long as memory lasts I must be wretched ! ' "

"Poor creature ! her punishment must be like Cain's—greater than she can bear."

"Yes, and it touches me to see her endeavouring

to *expiate* her sins. She has taken the child, Helen Morton, under her entire care, and devotes herself to it. She is a plain, disagreeable little girl, without one attraction, and with exactly the disposition which it is most difficult to train. But Dora is resolute in her self-sacrifice, and bears all with untiring patience. She has at last gained the victory over her own temper, and, if she could forget the past, might be at least a resigned sufferer. But there is something in the perpetual reflection that her words and actions drove her now truly loved and lamented Sidney from her that keeps her wounds open, and, as yet, she has not found balm to heal. *Her* past is, indeed, a bitter one. Contrast it with any other you know of, and do not the pains of all others fade into nothing?"

"They do, indeed."

Clara saw from the window that her pony was looking impatient, so she took leave of her friend, saying, "May I come again very soon?—you always do me good. Poor Dora, I wish I could comfort her! I shall not be able to banish her from my thoughts. Poor thing! it must be dreadful in her case to look back."

It was, indeed! The past so stormy, the scene so replete with discordant memories—she could remember nothing which did not feed her secret sorrow—that undying pain which now possessed her

inmost soul. There was a craving desire in her heart to atone, to make reparation, to lead a new life: but with her hitherto untutored spirit, her vague ideas of what was right, she could not grope her way, and in the darkness round her could see no answer to her wailing cry—

“ *What shall I do?* ”

## CHAPTER IV.

"This world is but the rugged road  
Which leads us to the bright abode  
Of peace above;  
So let us choose that narrow way  
Which leads no traveller's foot astray  
From realms of love."

COPLAS DE MANRIQUE.

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As Clara had said, her life was not a "stirring one." The busy whirl was over, and she was left to think at her leisure, or to read other memories than her own; to dwell on subjects which till now had seldom engrossed her, and from which she too often turned listlessly away. It might be the natural reaction after what she had herself called "living for the world:" it might be that inner longing to fill the vacuum in her mind which the cessation of the sort of occupation she had been accustomed to left behind. She felt the void, although she could not always define it to herself; and now the various resources which education had invested her with seemed to her to have been more needed in the world that she had so adorned than in the privacy of her present life. "Then Edgar was so much away, and in the

evenings he was often so tired ; and, besides, it took such a time to tune her harp—she could not bear the trouble of restringing it so often. It had always been done *for* her by the tuner from C——’s.” Mrs. Colville liked to be quite quiet in her own little sitting-room all the morning. And, in fact, she felt like Desdemona’s Moor—

“Othello’s occupation’s gone.”

But what an “occupation” it was!

“Describe one of your days to me,” said Mrs. de Vere. “I shall be more able to judge of what you have given up.”

“I am afraid you will think it was a very frivolous life. I never could manage to be early after the season fairly began, and my first annoyance in consequence was, that Edgar could not breakfast with me regularly, for I always felt that I had so much to say to him about things which were more naturally discussed then than at any other time. Then I had so many invitations, and notes and letters to answer. We never were a single day without engagements at home or elsewhere. I used to arrange about my balls, and dinner parties, and *soirées* ; and then, if I had no *matinées* to go to, I always had visits to pay, and such quantities of shopping ; for although I really never did care very much about dress, I was

obliged to give my attention to it. Then I had my opera box on my hands, really quite a care at times, for I liked being good-natured about it, and there were so many people to lend it to when I did not fill it with my own home party. Often, after the opera we went to balls; and I confess I used to feel very tired. I never could find time to read; sometimes I was obliged to skim over the new novels, because people spoke about them, but that was not reading. When papa was our guest, I got through the leading article to him every day; and I always looked at parts of the speeches, if Edgar was interested in the subject of them. Of course I never left my dressing-room without having given my mind and thoughts to important and serious matters; but I did not read much even then—I could not always fix my thoughts as I wished to do. Little Edgar used to fatigue me; but I saw him regularly at stated times, and—but, I am really ashamed to tell you—the only maternal duty I performed was going to order pretty hats or frocks for him at Moon's. I was very fond of him, and delighted in looking at him and amusing him when I was not too tired; but you know in town, during the season, one gets so little real rest. I used to enjoy coming here to give our fêtes: we did that twice, sometimes three times in the spring or early summer: we never gave them later, because

we had to go to Colehurst then. I once thought that we might have given one this June, but that was before I was so utterly disgusted with the very people I used to entertain in that way. Edgar told me, too, what I never knew before, that every one cost us three hundred pounds, and that you know is out of the question now. Three hundred pounds seems a great deal, and I might have managed one for a hundred pounds or a hundred and fifty pounds, but then I must have left out the concerts, the magician, the ballet dancers, and I did not like to do that. You will be shocked when I tell you that I felt quite meritorious when I admitted that good Mrs. Spencer, who never came to me excepting on one plea, and that was to get our influence (we had a great deal then), or money, or votes, for people who needed them. I used to think I had done something really praiseworthy when I sat quietly and listened to her long details—I always felt pleased with myself. Giving her money for the different cases was nothing—I had such quantities, so I never felt any self-gratulation on that subject; it was for bearing the interruption to my other employments with patience that I praised myself. I always knew that, somehow or other, I was doing good, and that pleased me too. We used to be very glad to go quite into the country, but I never had much time to myself even

then. We always had the house full in the hunting season and in the autumn, but it was a more regular life, and I could do things, or rather, order them to be done, for the poor people myself. Edgar has always been the most generous benefactor to all who required his help. Oh, you cannot think how for him I feel the change—the dreadful reverse in our circumstances: his noble nature must be cramped now—” And then Clara sighed such a sigh!

“I can enter into that feeling most fully; but do you know, I cannot bear you to use the words ‘dreadful reverse!’ Only look at what your position still is—this beautiful Hermitage of yours: everything so perfect about you. An income still, which, for the size of your family, people would call abundant. Every necessary; every luxury; the privilege of having your parents with you, your lovely child, your own good health and Sir Edgar’s, and, above all, the surpassing blessing which you possess in him. There is no room for the word ‘dreadful!’”

“Well, then, I won’t use that again. I see how many blessings I have, I do not forget them I assure you: it’s not *that*; it is the weariness of spirit I feel sometimes which distresses me.”

“I can understand that, too; after the life you have been describing, which, as you truly say, was ‘in the world and for the world,’ you could only be

expected to feel what you do. It was a vapid one (you must let me say exactly what I think): still there was that sort of excitement in it which in the reaction could only produce satiety, lassitude, dissatisfaction: it was not one fitted to either your principles, understanding, or disposition. You were made for better things. Don't think me harsh: I have had much experience—much more than most people; some of it purchased at a cost which seemed to me at the time to be too great. Some of it came naturally in the train of former suffering; but whilst it has filled me with sympathy for others who were distressed by the same disquietudes that I had known, it has opened my eyes wide, so that I can discern the cause just as clearly as I do the effect.”

“Will you tell me something of that experience?”

“I will; although I do not like talking of myself. One so naturally forgets in reciting the errors of others, if those errors brought what was painful on ourselves, the extenuating circumstances of the case, and there generally are some—most people have reasons for what they do—”

“I will not be selfish, though. My dear Mrs. de Vere, you look pale: are you quite well?”

“I am not very strong to-day. Poor Dora was ill last night, and I stayed with her till it was late this morning.”

"Poor Mrs. Morton ! I am so sorry for her, and I am sure you would rather be with her now ; or you ought to be resting, and not giving your time up to me."

"No : she does not need me at present. I left her when you came, but not before she had promised to walk in the garden. She is there now."

"Is she often ill ?"

"Not often ; but last night she was more wretched than usual. She had sunk into one of her fits of despondency, and her self-reproaches and hopeless lamentations were quite overpowering. She does not repine, poor thing ! for she always says now, 'I deserve all the misery I endure ; it is only retribution !' What rankles most in her breast is the recollection of the last hour she and poor Sidney passed together. 'If one word of love or gentleness had been uttered by either of us ! if mine had not been all bitterness and cruelty ! if he had not been so excited and angry (no wonder he was angry) ! I might by this time have become deadened to suffering—at least, its acuteness might have passed away—I might have known comparative peace ; but now—how can I ever forget that I drove him from his home ? I drove him to his fate—' were her words last night."

"Her thoughts must be harrowing indeed ; but

she is penitent, and, you say, she tries to expiate the past. Surely in time she will grow more calm—more resigned.”

“I trust she will. At present I see no signs of improvement, but I do not despair.”

No; there was no room for despair; for He, even He, against whom she had sinned, is “*Gracious and Merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.*”

Years after this conversation took place Clara heard that the mourning, self-convicted Dora had realised the blessed truth that “a broken and a contrite heart” our God “will not despise,” and that then she had found peace to her soul!

Two or three days after this interview with her kind friend, Clara was again at her side.

“I have persuaded mamma to extend her drive, and she is to call for me an hour hence. You know you have half promised to give me an epitome of your life; I am quite impatient.”

“I must first answer this note, if you will excuse me for a few minutes, and you shall look at a letter in the mean time which reached me last night from that dear young creature Lady Gertrude de Courcy. You have often heard me speak of her and her interesting mother.”

Clara was much struck with the simplicity and innocent warmth of the writer; truth seemed stamped

on every sentence; and although her most secret thoughts seemed laid open to her friend, there was nothing which could make her feel that the subject of them was too sacred for a stranger's eyes, and Clara only knew her by report.

The child—for she was little more, being only sixteen, and, chiefly owing to her natural disposition and the sort of education she had received, a perfectly unsophisticated one—had touched on her fears about the stability of her own principles.

“I am to go to-morrow to grandpapa's. Mamma leaves me there, for she must be at K—— for the next three weeks, and I shall be left to my own guidance, whilst I am also sure to be exposed to great temptations. I feel quite frightened. I have no confidence in myself. I told mamma so to-day, and she said, ‘So much the better; I don't wish you to lean on yourself. You know, my love, where to seek for strength to withstand the evils which you dread. I would much rather see you as you are, timid and shrinking, than self-reliant. You must try to remember perpetually that in this time of our probation, whether we are surrounded by the allurements of the world, or living out of it, as you and I generally do, that we have need of continual assistance to keep us right; and, dearest, ‘you are not alone’—remember *that*. Write very fully to me. I wish you were

likely to see our dear Mrs. de Vere; you could with safety open your heart to her, and tell her of all your difficulties.”

“And so, you see, I come to you even before they begin. You know how kind grandpapa is, and how constantly he is thinking of our amusement. Charles is to be with me, and Archie, and the little ones; but *they* are safe enough, dear little pets! I shall get into what mamma calls ‘a vortex of gaiety’ at once—driving about, riding in the Park, seeing such numbers of sights! such heaps of people! And then grandpapa gives so many dinner parties. He has ‘not opened his house for balls yet,’ he says, and ‘waits till I am presented.’ He has had no private concerts, either, since we lost dear grandmamma; but it is all so bewildering to me. Charles, Archie, and I are to go to the Queen’s juvenile ball on the 10th: Aunt Georgie is to be our chaperon. My great difficulty the last time I was with them was that I had so little time for thinking, and hardly a moment for reading. And they never would let me rest. It is almost ungrateful of me, but I would much—much rather go with mamma to K——, where we see no one, and are so very quiet (I have plenty of time there for doing sensible things, and useful things, too, in the village); and then it is so much easier to be right when there are no people near

to tempt me to do wrong; but there is Julia Carter, how I dread her! she laughs so at what she calls my prejudices, and what mamma would call principles. And one thing more I must tell you, for it is the worst part of the whole. In a little time I get accustomed to the life, and find myself *liking* it; it pleases me so to know that I am admired—thought so tall and pretty; and then everybody makes a fuss about my playing. I remember last year even, when mamma thought of giving me some lessons from Benedict, that grandpapa said I did not the least require them, that I had such wonderful execution and such perfect taste. Don't think me conceited for repeating this. I feel that it is better that I should tell you everything. When we go back to K—— I never can settle at first, and everything seems so dull—so stupid. Now you see, dear, dear Mrs. de Vere, what I am afraid of. I think I play much better this year than I did last (you know music never has been a difficulty to me); mamma says it is one of the talents for which I must give account; but if it only elates me so very much to be praised and flattered about it—what shall I do?"

There was more in this strain; but when Clara gave the letter back to Mrs. de Vere, she made no comment beyond, "How naturally she writes, and how well I can understand her fears!"

“Yes, poor dear! she has perils before her; but I am not afraid of her being unable to surmount them. Her mother is quite an angel, and well able to guide her. As long as she is under her guardianship, Gertrude de Courcy will be in safe shelter; and as her continual aim has been to prepare her child for the battle of life, and to arm her for victory, I do not feel afraid of her sinking under the struggles which she is sure to feel, for she has a vivid imagination, and can therefore enjoy to a great extent the pleasures of life which she will be introduced to under their most fascinating and refined form.”

“Have you seen Lady D. lately?”

“Not for more than three years. She lost her husband very soon after we met last. She never goes into society; and I have heard that she says she never will again enter into the scenes which in her earliest days she found too attractive and alluring. When her daughter is older she may alter her determination. In the present instance she feels that she cannot well rebel against her father’s wishes about the children, and I think she shows judgment there. I do not wonder at her shrinking in her own person from scenes which are now associated in her memory with past happiness—gone, never to return! and much that was also deeply painful in her course.”

"It will surely be very difficult for her to draw a line about her children?"

"I think it will, but I trust she will be rightly guided, and so steer clear of giving offence to others, especially to those of her husband's family who do not think as she does. She may do harm when she would, I know, wish to do good. She is a most lovely character. I never knew any one more single-minded or more weaned from this world. I can truly say of her, that amidst her many and heavy trials—sorrows of no common order, she '*holds her heavenly course serene.*' I never saw such serenity.

"I remember her years ago, when she was first entering what is called the world. She was certainly very lovely and very bewitching, and was accordingly smiled on and admired. At first she seemed to be beguiled by what was so naturally captivating to a young guileless creature; but her affections were concentrated in her husband. Her first disappointments were in him. Perhaps she expected too much; she was warmhearted and romantic: he did not respond to her feelings. He had pursuits which she could not possibly share. In time they became to a certain degree divided: his family said she had lost her influence over him by being too austere in her views, and that her religious principles were irrational.

"I believe, from what I have heard, that she was injudicious. How difficult it is to be 'as wise as a serpent, and as harmless as a dove!' She did mischief, or was permitted to leave false impressions—for her inmost desire was to do good. If the Royal Psalmist prayed so earnestly for judgment, we may be very sure that we have all need to do the same. She was an affectionate wife and a long-suffering one, for he did not understand her, and so she was often (loving him as she did) miserable, but she never complained; she was too high-minded, or, perhaps I ought to say, too full of Christian lowliness and meekness ever to do that. She only seemed to me to become purer and holier—more and more refined from earthly dross. I never can forget her words the last time I ever saw her. We were sitting together on the beach of the sea-coast at L——, that vast expanse of water before us which speaks of endless eternity. The scene was full of beauty and that calm stillness which in its unruffled tranquillity brings peace to the spirit.

"She had been talking with deep feeling of her eldest child—the very Gertrude who writes that letter, and who was in very delicate health at the time, and had been alarmingly ill. A more devoted mother I never knew. Her watchings when sickness visited her little ones were indeed unceasing; and,

with the penetration of a mother, she had discovered symptoms which had escaped the physician's observation ; her scrutiny had been closer than his, and she was trembling for her child's life. Still her calmness surprised me. I knew it did not spring from apathy. She spoke of her boys ; of their good dispositions, their loving natures, and the deep thankfulness she felt on their account because, as she said, 'they are giving their young hearts to God.' She added, 'I care for nothing else.' Her thoughts and words again reverted to Gertrude, and then she spoke in the fulness of her heart of her surpassing joy in that child, and her boundless trust in the Divine mercy which had so blessed her. 'He will add all other things to the portion of my children ; they seek Him—can I desire more ? I may well commit them solely to His keeping. I have no doubts, no misgivings, no dread ; I know Him in whom I believe, and with my whole heart and soul I trust Him. He will do what is best. I sometimes feel that, in the blessed security that they are His children, I could calmly yield them up to Him. I often feel this about Gertrude. I remember what the world was to myself ; how at one time its snares encompassed me ; how its pleasures allured me and occupied me, till, one after another, the illusions which had attracted me vanished, and I saw how

empty they were. I remember, too, how much I suffered—how in secret I mourned over my disappointment. I cannot help wishing that she may not be exposed to the same ordeal, and discover for herself what I have learned from dire experience. I feel that I could even give her up now, in her days of comparative innocence and purity. Oh! far—far rather would I do that than see her live to be contaminated and tried beyond her strength. She is so lovely now—so fit for heaven.’

“I told her that she was in my opinion a truly happy mother, and that I could not help earnestly hoping that her children might all be spared to bless her more and more; that she little knew the pain of parting—the anguish of separation: it was a sorrow no one could comprehend fully till they had experienced it; and I prayed that heaven might avert it from her. She thought now that it would be easy to give her darling up: she did not know the agony of watching the slow decay, the lingering suffering, the hopeless sickness, before the bonds were broken, and the spirit set free. I had known it, and prayed that she might be spared such surpassing sorrow, and be permitted to go on training the precious ones committed to her for their great inheritance.

“She is gifted with rare beauty, and from her spirit emanates the exquisite expression of heavenly

meekness which makes that beauty so engaging. Her exalted rank raises her above general observation ; in other cases it exposes the possessors of it to the gaze of the world ; but she never seems to regard it as anything more than an attribute bestowed on her by Providence, which she must keep unspotted. I was much struck by her manner of instilling courtesy to others, to Lord Henry, when, like a lively child as he is, he was forgetting it ; but I am afraid, as you are not personally acquainted with this charming person, that you will be tired if I go on."

"Oh no ; it does me good to listen to you."

"It did me good to know her. I remember after parting with her last that my first impulse on reaching my room was to kneel to Him to Whom the most secret emotions of my heart were known, and to pour out its abundance to Him in praise and thanksgiving for having given me such an interest as she will be to me as long as I live.

"I feel perfect repose about her ; the 'Hope' which is the 'Anchor' of her soul will sustain her. Angels' wings will o'ershadow her path, however difficult and thorny it may be."

"You have given me a new interest by telling me of her. What a sorrow—what a different one to poor Dora's her widowhood must be !"

"Yes. For long it was overwhelming in its depth ;

but in her desolation she has clung closer than ever to Him Whose Will removed her earthly stay. And she has no self-reproach to add bitterness to the cup."

"Oh dear! I see the carriage coming. Mamma's hour has been a very short one. And not one word about yourself have I heard. When may I come again?"

"To-morrow, if you like."

## CHAPTER V.

“O! ’tis sad to lie and reckon  
All the days of faded youth,  
All the vows that we believed in,  
All the words we spoke in truth.”

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“I AM afraid I made a rash promise when I said I would give you an epitome of my life, for in speaking of one’s self it would be better to be as laconic as Cæsar, with his ‘*veni, vidi, vici*,’ and yet it is so difficult to check the flow of ideas when they take us back to the memories of early days. I hope your pony won’t be impatient.”

“No, dear Mrs. de Vere,” replied Clara; “I have not put his temper to the test in that way, for I have sent little Edgar and his nurse on to — Forest, and two hours must be allowed for the distance. It will be of such use to me to know how you steered clear of all perils, and at last reached the haven of peace, where, as far as I can judge, no trouble ever seems to disturb your tranquillity.”

“It would please me much to help you, but, after all, when I talk of my ‘great experience,’ I feel as if

I ought to explain that I allude only to general and common events, to a course of every-day life which was neither very rugged nor tumultuous, neither very eventful nor interesting; and yet, as the bark did not always glide on smooth waters, you may like to know how at last it reached the haven you allude to."

"I should indeed."

"I must first warn you that, as a '*raconteuse*,' I must be egotistical, and very probably tedious. I will not, however, involve you in all the mazes of my long and distinguished lineage on both sides of the house. I might wander too widely from the main object; for I assure you there are legends of interest attached to many of the heroes and heroines whose names adorned that line. I will be content with Tennyson's words, and you can apply them to myself:—

‘She is bright and young, and her glory comes  
Of an ancient ancestry.’

"Now that will be almost as much as you require in the outset.

"You have heard my father's honoured name—honoured indeed, exalted far above those of many whose lives were as open to the world as his own—for truly he was a great man in every sense of the

word, and his light shone so brightly before men that they could not fail to look upon him with veneration and affection. But I must even here rein in my thoughts, for in speaking of those whom we most loved, it is so impossible to prevent eulogy and the tribute due to excellence from verging on the panegyrical.

“And yet of him could I ever say enough?

“He was the noblest being: with his glorious mind, his transcendent goodness, his elevated powers, and a holy purity, which makes me feel when I think of him as if all that is most sublime in the human character had been embodied in him; and this I know, that every lofty hope, every aspiration after excellence, every worthy sentiment I ever felt sprang from his teaching.

“I was much with him, and of my early days I can indeed say, ‘*Dolce nella memoria* :’ I can look back on nothing but pleasantness and peace whilst he was spared to guide and cherish me. He was the one great object of my life; he had given me principle before I could define *why* it was wise to choose the good and leave the evil; for, under culture like his, strength is imperceptibly imbibed even in earliest childhood, and when in the spring-time of life my eyes were gradually opened, and I could discern more clearly what his precepts had prepared me for,

I saw the full need for all the hidden resources which till then had hardly been called into action.

“There was nothing repulsive in the characteristics of the worldliness that even then came before me ; the very young do not search into motives for the conduct and manners of others ; and if people were pleasing, refined, and courteous, I did not see what harm there could be in cultivating them. *He* saw that I might be too easily attracted by what, if it did not hurt me, could not improve me ; and so, although I lived in a large circle, I had very few associates. I heard a great deal about science, about the power of intellect, the dignity of learning, and the elevation of sentiment which sprang from the whole as a natural consequence.

“As a first-rate classical scholar, an eloquent orator, the master of every subject discussed, the erudite expounder of every difficulty, the oracle to whom men turned for enlightenment in perplexity, and guidance in emergency, he drew all the most distinguished and learned of the day around him ; and thus I breathed an atmosphere which was the most congenial to my nature, that nature, or rather taste, having been formed as I have told you. As I have said, I had a few companions, but very few ; it was a matter of accident that they were, with one or two exceptions, of higher rank than myself ; but I

never thought of or felt the difference. Our social position seemed the same, our interests, occupations, inclinations, and tastes the same. I never was tempted to give an undue preference to rank, and yet even then I could mark the difference which appeared in some instances.

“I never could endure servility; my nature recoiled from all that was despicable; and adulation of those who were exalted simply by rank or other adventitious circumstances, such as wealth or the influence which they gave them, greatly annoyed me.

“I had learnt to venerate *real* greatness, and I had so often seen it in union with what is *called* greatness in this world, that I naturally looked for it in the circle I had been most conversant with. It was this predilection in favour of refinement (for one generally finds that characteristic there) that allured me as I grew older, and made me so susceptible to impressions which do not easily fade from the mind. I thought I saw truth and beauty in the characters of those I associated with, and I *trusted* them. I had never even felt that there were disparities in rank. Elevated far above many others myself, because I was the child of such a man, I never noticed that the social basis I had been reared on was one raised so entirely on *circumstances*, that if they were altered my position was likely to be less secure than that of

those for whom high birth and titled sires had provided a foundation, which, according to the laws which govern such matters, could not be altered.

“My father used to say to me, ‘Do not, dear child, expect too much.’

“Why he said so I could not quite understand; I had hardly formed expectations for the future, my present was absorbing enough, and too charming to give me any excuse for exploring into the unknown regions which my imagination might have led me into. Certainly if I ever looked forward, it was with a sort of visionary hope gleaming into the distance of a most enchanting world, where every one would be kind and courteous, engaging and true; there was to be no hypocrisy or deceit. I did not even admit gradations of goodness, for perfection was the hue of all I anticipated; there were not even April showers in the vista—all was to be perpetual sunshine.

“You will think that education had not prepared me wisely, and that therefore the work it had to perform was very imperfect; but I am telling you of my earliest perceptions, and I do so to show you how, by degrees, we are led on from one step to another, sometimes roughly enough, till *experience* has taught us what precept fails to enforce. I had been gently guided and counselled, but I had learnt nothing of endurance, nothing which had attuned my mind to

the realities of life ; I was living in a happy land ; it was a dreamlike state, with no apparent peril near.

“I will not talk of my mother, or my other home ties ; I should never stop if I did ; but we were all closely bound to each other ; and I now look back on the calm, peaceful tenor of our young and happy days with a lingering love for every thing and every being connected with them. We were taught from the first dawn of reason ‘Not to lean on our own understandings ;’ and full well we knew where to go for strength in times of weakness, help in the hour of need, and solace in affliction. In our hearts we treasured up the emphatic words spoken by the best of fathers—how well I remember his ‘*Primum querite regnum Dei!*’—to my brothers, when they respectively took the first steps on their outward course in life.

“It had been so deeply impressed on my own mind that there was but One Power to cling to, that it was *instinctive* in me to do so ; and there lies the great usefulness and importance of first convictions. We are ready to believe all we are taught ; there are no conflicting opinions rising up, there is no inclination to wrestle with truth—

‘ Uttered not, yet comprehended,  
Is the spirit’s voiceless prayer.’

And we *seek* where we shall as truly *find* : and do so

with the fervid faith of youth, when that faith has been nourished and tempered by the genial influence of the good.

“There was, as I have told you, a strong tendency on my part to see everything under its brightest and most engaging form. Oh! how charming I thought every one was! I really do not think that it was simply because people were so kind, so ready to praise, so swift to discover excellences in me which my own conscience denied the existence of, that I was attracted to them, but because in themselves they were so refined from evil by education and perpetual contact with all that was best and noblest, that I could not help admiring them.

“I often look back now and wish that veil had never been withdrawn from my eyes—that the same implicit faith in apparent goodness still filled my mind; but alas! alas! with every year of one’s life a quickened sense of reality comes to chase away illusions: mine did not go all at once.

“I married my dear Cuthbert with the fullest approbation of my family. Wealth and rank had been within my choice, and he had neither; but with the blessing of my parents, and what we thought *enough*, what did we need more?

“We lived near W——, where my father’s official residence was. Cuthbert held an office of compara-

tively little importance then ; but soon Cuthbert de Vere's name rang on the lips of men, and he was extolled by every voice.

“To those who have known the thrilling delight of hearing such melody as words of praise bestowed on those whom they most honour and love, I need not enlarge on it : it is indeed past description. To those who have not known it, it would be vain to attempt even the most vivid picture : it is one of the sensations one must experience to understand.

“He had great talent, and we had no corroding cares. Our position in society was established for us. He was of unsullied descent, so was I ; we had no expenses which our means could not meet, and we were not required to entertain the world in general. Réunions once a month, when the élite crowded round us, and small occasional dinner parties, which were confined to friends or relations, did not draw too heavily either on our financial resources or on what was of more consequence still to him, his time : it was a very pleasant life.

“I had no inclination for desultory employment, and there was no vivacious eagerness in my nature to urge me on in the search for amusement—quite enough came before me in the daily round. Then I had the never failing excitement of watching Cuthbert in his public course : he was in Parliament and

spoke eloquently, always to the point, ever displaying that concentration of thought which gives force to every word. I once met with an encomium on the late Sir Francis Burdett, which I feel I may in my retrospect of Cuthbert as a speaker apply to him:—  
'He was full of music, grace, and dignity, even amid the village tumult; and, unlike all mob orators, *raised* the taste of the populace to him, instead of lowering his own to theirs.'

"I remember at the election at — how this struck me. There was no obscurity, no confusion in Cuthbert's style: like a clear stream, on it flowed, and his reasoning carried all men with him—all who had knowledge themselves, all who had their mental visions undarkened by ignorance and prejudice.

"He was always successful; and it was in the midst of the congratulations of his party, and accompanied by the sympathy of those whose friendship he valued most, that he returned to W——. But after the only greatly contested election he had ever been exposed to, our pleasure was damped by finding that my father had been taken ill: he continued so for some time; and after wringing a reluctant consent from his political supporters, he withdrew from public life. He had done much good: even those who did not take the same views as he did acknow-

ledged *that*; and all united in feeling that he indeed deserved the dignities and honours which were to reward him.

“But before those well-earned laurels were bestowed, the Administration changed, and he retired into private life without the projected distinctions. And yet I need not say *that*, for there was a halo round his head which could not lose its brightness as long as he lived, and in men’s memories his name required no other distinctive mark than that he had already borne.

“His official income had been very large, and although there had been nothing reckless in his profusion, there had been unbounded liberality.

“Private means look comparatively small after the enjoyment and employment of a very large public revenue; but his was not the mind to feel the reverse. He had all the simplicity of philosophy in his nature; and when it seemed clear to him that his services were no longer required, for he said, ‘Providence has no ambiguity in such dispensations—it is plain to me that I was no longer needed;’ he seemed perfectly contented—his entire life had been a living commentary on his principles. He had with his whole soul loved his Heavenly Master, and now when under another phase His will was visible to him, he had not one regretful feeling; full of peace and the

dignity of acquiescence in what was ordered for him, he was ever

‘Serene, and resolute, and still,  
And calm, and self-possessed.’

“But I am coming now to the trials which were to prove the strength of my own principles of submission to the Divine will.

“My father lived entirely in the country : this fact cast a shadow at once on my days. I had hardly been separated from him before. But ‘duties are ours—events are God’s.’ I could say nothing—do nothing but bear meekly what infinite wisdom ordained for me.

“I could not leave Cuthbert. Amidst the cares of public life (and he was still in office, and had been advanced to a higher post within the last two years), the mind needs the repose of home—the balm of sympathy under troubles or perplexities ; and I had the surpassing comfort of knowing that mine soothed and encouraged him. Still how my heart yearned after my dearly loved father !—how all earthly interests excepting those inspired by my husband and children faded into nothing compared with that ardent longing to be with him and to be permitted to minister to him in even the slightest way !

“I told you that we were not rich, that we had

enough to meet moderate demands; but when the children became more expensive, and Cuthbert's position more prominent, we began to feel the value, I might say the necessity, for wealth.

"My brothers had all been portioned off and established in life: they were not extravagant, but they were surrounded by claimants on all they had. My two younger sisters were at home with my parents. They were just entering into general society when my father left office; of course the change to them and in their prospects was great. From either Mary or Harriet I heard daily, and no details were concealed from me. It was from the former I learnt what I was indeed utterly unprepared for. I had a letter from her just as I was going to my room to dress for an assembly at S—— House. I had been to the drawing-room in the morning; for although neither of us went more into the world than we could help, I had like others form and etiquette to attend to. I had been only three or four times that season to the very great parties which were given in our circle, and I had not intended going that evening to that at S—— House; but Cuthbert said he felt he ought to go, and of course that was enough—there were political reasons for almost everything one did in those days.

"I had no spirits for the sort of scene, Mary's letter

had so depressed me ; she said in one part—‘It seems quite strange, and to us unaccountable, but it is, I fear, nevertheless true, that dearest papa is not well off—I mean by that not nearly so rich as he has always been ; mamma does not confide in us, but I see she is often very low, and, for the last year, Harriet and I have observed that she hesitates, and thinks about even the commonest expenses ; yesterday an accident happened to one of the carriage horses, and papa said when he heard it—“Then tell Bennett that the other must go to Tattersall’s directly, the sooner the better ;” and then, turning to mamma, he added, “and you will not require a coachman, so he can get another place ; I think, dearest, you settled that we did not particularly need a carriage here.” Mamma assented, and the horses are gone and Bennett too. You know last year our riding was given up because papa thought it better not to have a groom, and we could not have riding horses without one. Then I heard papa declare, lately, when there was something said about a better head-gardener and another under one, “that he could not afford to give the wages clever men of that sort required, so that, much as he wished it, he could make no change.” And, in fact, there are a thousand things of this sort happening ; and now, in their advancing age, papa and mamma will miss the comforts they

need; how it will be possible to do without horses I can't imagine; I should say it would be utterly out of the question, and quite improper too. The idea of their not having such absolute necessities!—and I thought it bad enough to give up ours last year, but this is really too dreadful.' And other points I was enlightened on too; matters which I cannot weary you with.

"It made me very unhappy, and very thoughtful. Why were we not rich enough to obviate every difficulty? and then, even if we were, how difficult it would be to do so, my father so full of that sort of dignity which shrinks from receiving gratuitous benefits from others, and yet what did we not owe him? There was he, with the innate delicacy of a refined and honourable mind, shrinking from the bare idea of exceeding his means. He had once said—'I could not bear to be in the smallest degree in debt; it is contrary to my principles of probity, and quite at variance with my sense of what I am still bound to maintain; I can do without luxuries, without state, but I cannot live under obligations to others of that sort. What! not be able to pay for what we indulged in?—shocking!'

"Well, to return to the letter which had distressed me, and to the party we were going to. It was very brilliant; a great many of my father's friends were

there, and many of Cuthbert's, and I was trying to forget what had disturbed me, when a person who went by the sobriquet of 'Tuft-hunting Hawk' came up, and in a patronizing tone accosted me with— 'Ah, Mrs. de Vere, I am glad to see you here; we fancied that you had deserted our world. How is your poor father?'

"My poor father indeed! I cannot tell you how the word 'poor,' and the undeferential familiarity, jarred on my senses, and coming too from a man who had been the most obsequious and the most humbly respectful of those who had watched for his slightest mark of notice or recognition.

"My 'poor' father! I did not reply, and on looking round found that my interrogator had not even waited to hear my answer, but was almost springing forward to do some act of courtesy to a person whom I remembered having seen as a suppliant, and no unfrequent one either, for my father's patronage. When I looked again the Hawk was making adulatory pecks at the feet of another specimen of those people who are called 'hangers on,' when they have a boon to gain, a favour to implore, and who contrive to fasten themselves on the 'powers that be' without reference to the principles of either party till they get what they want.

"I had only to watch the evolutions of the Hawk

in order to discover who were the most influential, and, in *that* sense, the greatest of the day. Wherever a tuft appeared, there was the assiduous bird, wings full spread, head bent low, and beak well pointed, and the absurdity and wonder was that they all liked the biped and his flattery. The Hawk was versatile too; he had a number of resources; sometimes he spread a net which caught an antiquarian enthusiast; sometimes he snared the simple by making them believe that he had but one end in view, and that was to promote the happiness of all; and others he caught in the natural course of things, because they did not object to being so. He used to flutter round his prey and to darken their eyes (for he had no respect for truth) till they could see nothing, but that Mr. Hawk was 'the best creature in the world.' Very jealous was he when any one else approached, and by dint of their own worth gained a place in the circles of the great. If he could keep them out of them, he certainly would; sometimes he failed, and then the poor Hawk was sadly crestfallen. Well, this evening, as I tell you, I watched him, and what struck me most was, that the people he was devoted to were, with few exceptions, new to me; I asked Cuthbert about them.

"*They* were all in the ascendant.'

"I talked to him when we were at home again

about the contents of Mary's letter, and he decided at once that retrenchments, in my father's case, were not to be permitted.

"I must tell you that all the most eminent, all the most 'excellent of the earth,' who were within his reach, devoted themselves to him as much as ever; his retirement was, indeed, 'otium cum dignitate.' It was only amongst those worshippers of the sun who could not live excepting beneath its radiance, and who, when that sets, bend to stars of the first magnitude, that any difference could be observed.

"The good, the great, the high minded, were devoted to the Stanley who, as the head of their forces, had been their intrepid leader; they never swerved from their allegiance to his principles or attachment to his person.

"We knew this; and it was from no fear that he would be less estimable in their eyes because his state was gone that we felt tenacious about yielding it up, it was only that it was too painful to ourselves to think that he should *feel* the change which circumstances had induced.

"My great distress was that *we* had no power to alter it. Oh, with what impassioned earnestness did I wish for wealth then! *I* who had always said that it was a thing I could do without.

"We wrote to my brothers, and at once they

entered into our plans. The great difficulty was how to do what we wished without awakening the sensitive delicacy of my father—‘*Tout faire sans paroître.*’

“Cuthbert said that he had known cases where minds like my father’s, having been perhaps overstrained at one time, became morbid on some subjects in the reaction, and that this idea that he could not afford certain expenses was, perhaps, a symptom of this.

“We formed our plans; Mary was to entreat him to intrust her with all financial arrangements, in fact to place his income in her hands, and she was to take care that he and my mother had every comfort and all the attributes of wealth just as much as formerly.

“My father was to have a certain sum appropriated to his use, for his books, his charities, his personal expenses. Gordon, his old faithful servant, was to remain at the head of the male part of the establishment, and everything was to go on as usual. Mary told him that she could do everything with ease, and that he and my mother were to have no trouble, not a shadow of care. He consented, making only one stipulation—‘He was to see, by the receipts she brought him quarterly, that everything was paid for.’

“You may be sure that we took care that she had

a sufficient sum placed at her command. My brother and Cuthbert were responsible then. Bennett took up his position again as 'master of the horse,' and was busy selecting those required, when my dear father, who had walked out several times in the interregnum, caught cold and, after an illness of three days, was taken from us.

"Vain and futile indeed had all our fondly-planned schemes proved. From that moment I do not think I ever felt the slightest interest in the acquisition of wealth, and yet, very soon afterwards, it was showered upon us.

"Perhaps, indeed most probably, it was for his dear memory's sake that Cuthbert, as my father's son-in-law, became an object of greater attention, and was immediately exalted into the high place which he held for so many years. From other causes too we became very rich; but what was gold to me then? Oh, how the splendid trappings I was of necessity surrounded by wearied my spirit! with what apathy I looked on all—with what indifference I turned away from what a short time before I should have so eagerly grasped at!

"And it is even so, my dear Lady Aubrey: the brightness of this world, the glory of its possessions are valueless to us without an object; mine was gone, it had been to me a hallowed one, and when

the boon came I turned listlessly away from what had been granted too late. I cared for nothing!

“This was a very wrong state of things, something very like murmuring it has appeared to me since, and from this insensibility to the blessings still left me I was roused. I can hardly bear to look back to that time. Our beautiful Eustace, so like his father in talent and in person, so promising in every way, drooped and died. I cannot speak of him—you have seen his picture, it faintly describes his surpassing beauty, but often I cannot look at it.

“Sympathy with others is so naturally excited when we have ourselves known any deep sorrow, that it was the spontaneous impulse of my mind, and I had only to look around for objects. The same fever which had brought such anguish to us had carried desolation to many other homes, and I heard of much affliction in the very circles where I had before seen nothing but joy and prosperity.

“Fellow sufferers necessarily understand each other. I had said till then, ‘no one can realize what I feel;’ but I saw at that time, when communication with those in distress was unconstrained, unfettered by ceremony, and hearts in their craving for balm to heal were laid open to me, that many others had even greater trials to endure, and I endeavoured to brace my own mind up so as to be able to soothe them.

"I will not tell you now of any of the peculiar cases which interested and occupied me at that time, but I have never lost the sense of the great privilege I was permitted to know then, in being a comfort to others. And now, my dear young friend, I come to a point which I might enlarge on till you were wearied, so I will only tell you that my experience then has been a guide to me through many succeeding years, and that I *know* from that experience that there is nothing which so elevates us above the sorrow which might otherwise well-nigh crush us, as the remembrance of His words who was 'acquainted with grief,' and whose mission to us was to bind up the broken hearted, and to minister to every brother in need.

"I hear your carriage coming round, so I must leave off now. How patient you have been!"

"Oh, you have not told me half enough; you have only let me have a passing glance."

"And that I know is not enough, but when I go on I must take you into a very worldly world indeed: shall you like that?"

"Yes, if you show me how you glided through it, and yet were never tinged with evil."

"Perhaps you will not think that I did pass through unscathed, when you hear more."

"To-morrow I will try to come."

## CHAPTER VI.

“ And when the morrow came, I answered still  
To-morrow.”

“ Behold, of what delusive worth  
The bubbles we pursue on earth,  
The shapes we chase.”

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WHEN Clara reached home she found a carriage at the door, into which Lady Mary Capel, her two sisters, and Miss Ashton were entering. She was just in time to hear the rosebud exclaim, “ What shall I do ? ” There seemed, indeed, not an atom of space which she could be permitted to fill. Clara was much entertained at the dilemma, and reiterated her assurance that “ there was no room for her there ; that she had better stay with her, for that three hoops in one carriage were quite enough ; she would be annihilated if she ventured farther,” &c.

There was the silvery laugh again, and all the pretty intonations and mellifluous euphonism which could be uttered on either side ; but the rosebud must go back, whether she was to be utterly crushed or not.

Lady Mary had come up to town “ to arrange their

new house there, to see after papa, and to do all both she and Edward possibly could to persuade him to come to Holte Castle when they returned thither," &c.

Clara was "very sorry indeed that she had lost the pleasure of their visit, and that now they had not even time to look at little Edgar, who had increased in beauty ever since he had become a small hermit; and, besides, she had quantities of things to say to them and to hear from them."

"We have been all this time with dear Mrs. Colville," said Lady Mary.

"How do you think mamma looks?"

"Pretty well; but she does not seem quite so strong as she was when we saw her last."

"Ah! I am afraid the monotony of the country—at least of this place, does not suit her. Did she say anything about it?"

"On the contrary: she assured us that she quite delighted in the repose of it."

"Dear mamma! She is so contented."

It was arranged that if Mr. Colville and Sir Edgar could manage it, they were all to meet at dinner at Lord Acton's the end of the week; so with a few tenderly enunciated "*au revoirs*," they drove off.

When Clara went to her mother, she thought she looked very pale and exhausted.

"This visit has been too much for you, mamma. I wish so that I had been at home; so many all at once must have fatigued you."

"No, I don't think it was that. I do feel tired now; but it was a great pleasure to me to see them all. And dear Lady Mary is quite radiant; it did me good to look at her, and you see they brought their cousin Grace Ashton with them. I think she is much more pleasing than I expected from your account of her manners at Red Cross. Surely she must be improved?"

"I suppose she is; and perhaps being in contact with the Eltons has done her good. She has been staying there for nearly a month. I wonder how she and that wonderful Aunt Susy get on; there is a sort of affinity between them; they are both *rather* disagreeable. Confess, dear mamma, that you think so."

No reply came; and Clara, who had been arranging some roses in a vase which she had gathered before she went up stairs, turned suddenly round.

Mrs. Colville had sunk back on her chair, and seemed fainting.

Clara was instantly at her side. She could reach the bell where she stood, and in a few minutes Dalton assisted her efforts to produce reanimation, but lower and lower still sank the head, lifelessly fell

the arms, and pallor like the hue of death spread over that dear face. Clara, in her agony, with a piercing cry of "What shall I do?" again pulled the bell.

"Send instantly to R—— for Dr. Hope. Hurry the carriage off to meet the train, but don't say a word to either Mr. Colville or Sir Edgar. Quick! quick!"

"Oh, how dreadful! What can it be? it seems more than a fainting fit."

It did indeed—it looked like death!

Moments seemed as if they could not fly, time hung so heavily on the spirits. "Will nothing revive her? Lower her head! rub her hands! Ring again! Oh dear, oh dear! will nothing do? Mamma! mamma! my darling mother! Oh, God! in thy mercy help me! Oh, she is dying! Her heart does not beat! Oh, that they would come! Poor papa! Poor Edgar! How long it seems! Are they never coming?"

"It may be only a fainting fit, my lady. My mistress has had them before."

"As bad as this?"

"Not so long, perhaps; but oh, my lady, don't be so frightened! The Doctor must be here directly now."

In a few minutes more a step was heard.

"Thank God !" rose to Clara's lips, but she had no voice to utter.

Some rapid questions were put by Dr. Hope, and promptly answered by Dalton and the other servants in the room. In another instant the lancet was applied to the left arm. The blood would not flow. The alternative was a fresh application of even greater stimulants than those already used. The lips were forced open, and gradually something powerful was imbibed, for there was evidently an attempt to swallow.

The physician looked up. There was a ray of hope to be caught at once from his expression.

"There is more pulse—the heart's action is coming back."

At last there was an audible sigh.

"We must try to place her on the sofa. Open the window—gently, gently ! Now raise the head—that will do."

Again the effort to swallow was made, but still the general insensibility did not subside.

More moments of anxious, breathless watching, which were like hours to Clara, and then a tinge of life came back.

It was hope—it was joy, but unutterable. No one moved.

"Mrs. Colville must be kept perfectly quiet

was the next edict issued. Carriage wheels were heard.

"I cannot leave her. Go, Dalton, and tell papa not to be alarmed—the worst is over; but he must not come in just yet."

There were many hours of deepest apprehension, of restless inquietude, and tremulous agitation passed in that chamber that night, several fainting fits rapidly succeeding each other, and then prostration, which looked appalling indeed to the terror-stricken watchers.

What a piteous cry rose from the husband's heart! With what imploring earnestness, with what devotional beseechings for mercy, did the child breathe forth her soul's desires!

"Oh, my God! spare my mother! spare her! spare her! Give her back to us! Oh, hear us! pity us!—in Thy mercy look upon us!"

And the Long-Suffering, Ever-Compassionate, and Almighty arm was stretched out. The wife was given back to her husband—the mother to her child.

But, what a voice had spoken to the trembling ones! and now, in the intensity of their terror, with what tenacity had they clung to the Lord and Giver of life, in the deep conviction that He alone could help them!

As Clara sat in that still chamber by her father's

side, who could not be persuaded to leave it, what a haze seemed to envelope the past, and with what subdued interest did she regard everything but the one great object which pressed on her mind ! “ Oh ! if she is only given back to me, how impossible it will be for me to forget the perils we have passed through, or to turn to earth and its cares again ! ”

And the loving husband, how his heart yearned to testify, by the devotion of every power still left him, that it was his desire to “ show forth his thankfulness not only with his lips, but in his life ; ” and thus to prove his sense of the inestimable mercy he had received.

The lesson on the mutability of all things earthly had been sent before ; so Clara felt : but then what was the loss of wealth, what was the desertion of friends, what were all the privations she might still know, compared with that which had been impending over her ! What would even her blessings be to her if her mother was not near to share them ! How much keener every sorrow would be if her sympathy was not ready to soothe her !

As she wrote to Mrs. de Vere she was trembling still, and she knew not when they could meet, she could not bear to leave her mother for a minute.

“ I have just persuaded papa, who has been sitting up the last three nights, to go to his room, and

to-morrow—and yet how can I dare to ‘answer for to-morrow?’—I might be able to see you if you can come here.”

It was, indeed, very uncertain when they could meet again; for although Mrs. Colville’s recovery was confidently expected by her physician, there was evidence enough of weakness and suffering to give a sadly subdued tone to the hope within them.

It was quite evident to Mr. Colville that the strain upon her vital energies had been too great; such meek endurance, such unvaried calmness, and apparent contentment, had not dominated without a struggle with nature, and the conflict had been severe.

It was ever since the day when Richard’s unyielding and unsympathising nature had shocked her so much, that she had drooped; then the heartless haste with which those who had so long been her attendants had left her was another blow, and her anxiety lest Mr. Colville’s health should suffer from the arduous labours he had of late been exposed to, had all combined to affect the system and bring things to a crisis.

And now it was even with him as it was with Clara; the utter insignificance and nothingness of what had hitherto been a source of deepest care to him was forced on his mind with every remembrance of the past, every prospect for the future.

He thought of his recent toil, how he had "late taken rest and risen up early," and bent every power of his mind to the business matters brought before him, how wearied and worn out he had felt, how he longed for rest, and then how at the close of each day he had leant on her for sympathy, and then how in "sweet converse" with her about "the things which belonged to their peace," he had been raised above the worldly troubles which had thickened on his lot. It was that pale stricken look of his Eleanor's which went to his heart, and made him almost shudder when he thought that he might have saved her more, that he ought to have borne the conflict alone ; and yet, as he truly said, "We could not be separate in our sorrows any more than in our joys. Oh, Eleanor, what a second self, what a helpmeet thou hast ever been to me ; my strength, my comfort, my life !"

Then he looked back to the early days of their lives ; he remembered his surpassing joy when he won her, his unceasing delight in her increasing perfections, her tender sympathy with him, her unfeigned participation in everything which interested him, her adaptation to his pursuits, the perfect unison between them. He recollected with what pleasure she had joined him in his researches after the wonderful in art and science, how her refinement and

taste had blended with his own, and they had together selected many of the treasures which he had added to the ancestral possessions at Colne Priory. He retraced each scene, almost each rapture they had shared over the Titians, Guidos, Rembrandts, and Da Vincis, which had in after days revived all those passages in their young lives; he remembered one incident after another which had been to them both full of interest at the time, and which had been perpetuated by the association of ideas which hung like a halo round that happy past. He had wealth then for every taste, health and energy for every enjoyment. What pleasure they had both felt when they settled at their English home in arranging the specimens of art they had collected; then during the months they passed in town, when the business which came before him was no trouble, no care, how smoothly the current flowed! And when the first cloud was cast on their brightness, and their infant sons were taken from them—their two most beautiful little ones—then most promising, most engaging, how, forgetting her own anguish, she had soothed his—how she had led him to “the still waters of comfort,” and helped to raise his heart above even a parent’s woe: again retrospect carried him to the days when, after that first sorrow, they changed the scene to Switzerland, to gain the repose they needed—

the rest which is ensured by retirement from the "busy world" to the sublime regions where all things, excepting the glorious works of nature, fade from the eye, and where they had been refreshed and strengthened, and enabled to go on to Florence—that spot where the power of man to beguile the senses is so perpetuated in the fruits of labour, of genius, of talent, and the mind is irresistibly forced to acknowledge the immortality of the spirits which had left, even on earth, such traces of what can never die! His thoughts wandered to the studios he had frequented with her, and to the repositories of art where they had together searched for what was worthiest of admiration; he remembered his passing disappointment when he heard that some beautiful Cellini vases—the most perfect specimens of that graceful master's wondrous power of moulding even adamant to his will; that he had ever seen—had been appropriated by an Italian prince, with whom he felt he could not compete, and how she had said "Do not despair, you shall have them before the dawn of another day;" and that there they were in the evening before his eyes; how he had treasured them, how he had almost exulted over them; how at the different courts they visited she, his own lovely Eleanor, had been admired; how her grace and refinement had attracted even kings, and how proud he had felt

of her. Years passed in review before him, years of pleasantness, and peace, and usefulness. He followed her through her daily course of love and duty, her devotion to all that was best, her gentle goodness to the poor, her untiring energy in every good cause, their mutual joy in their dear Clara, and much of the care they had felt about the disposition of the son who had been, of three, the only one spared to them. Mingled, indeed, were his feelings on that subject, and much alloyed by pain; for had there not been sorrow springing from that son's nature, blended with the consolations which his heart fully acknowledged under his late reverses?

Why had not that hand been stretched out in filial tenderness to avert the evils which had fallen on him and Eleanor, his noble-hearted Aubrey, and his loving, gentle Clara?

Why had not he endeavoured to preserve the ancient grandeur of his ancestral home, that home now so desolate, so utterly dismantled, so robbed of the wealth of ages? Where were now the fruits of his own personal researches, those monuments of art which he had so delighted in?—

Gone, swept away for ever from his sight, to strangers' hands they had passed away, and must be henceforward to him "as if they had never been." Well might he exclaim—

“Of what delusive worth  
The bubbles we pursue on earth,  
The shapes we chase !”

And yet the reaction of all these natural meditations on the present, all these contemplations of the past, was, in the anxious watcher by the side of what he cherished most on earth, the most perfect contentment, the most tranquil peace ; and, as he said, “almost incapacity to wish for anything more.”

She who was, indeed, his “all in all” was given back to him, and now again together they give their hearts’ devotion to Him Who has so blessed them ; they look forward with chastened spirits and firm faith ; their aspirations are exalted far above this world :—

“Out of the depths of stormy night  
Their hopes look up with cloudless eyes,  
And to the One True deathless light  
Their joyful pinions rise.”

## CHAPTER VII.

“Let no one fondly dream again  
That Hope and all her shadowy train  
Will not decay;  
Fleeting as were the dreams of old,  
Remembered like a tale that’s told,  
They pass away.”

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MANY weeks passed before Clara could leave her charge for more than a few minutes at a time ; but when the latter was able to get into her garden-chair and could enjoy the balmy air, then with a book as her companion and old Dalton as the comptroller-general of her actions, her child used to say :—“ Now, dearest mamma, I will leave you in peace and trust to your discretion about not letting little Edgar approach you if he is in one of his *vif* humours.”

The latter was not an unnecessary injunction, for the fascinations of the grandson were very great : he had so many beguiling ways and such intuitive knowledge of his own influence over her that, as she said, it was “ impossible to resist him.” He attracted her attention perpetually, either by his actions, which

were all graceful, or by his voice, which was "the sweetest she had ever heard."

"There never was such a little cherub, and from hour to hour I can trace his increasing loveliness of mind and body: he is so good, so gentle, so charming, indeed I do not think he could tire me."

Thus used Mrs. Colville to plead; and we must confess that she and the "small hermit" generally carried the point they each had at heart—she to devour him with her caresses, and he to sprawl on the turf at her feet and to gain possession of Fido's tail, or one of his soft silky ears, till Pheemy came to the rescue and liberated the fat white spaniel from his power.

There is something so exquisitely engaging in the beauty of children in general, that it is very easy to enter into the enthusiastic admiration they excite; and certainly this little fellow in particular seemed born to be cherished with no common love. Then he was so intelligent, he gave such early promise of goodness; he was already so sensitive and affectionate, that no one could call it *infatuation* when the invalid enlarged on his perfections; and when one knew how perpetually her love for the child led her as a suppliant to the "King of kings" for every good and perfect gift for this precious little one. She knew how soon the conflict with evil would begin; and

sometimes when she was gazing on her darling, her lips would move with the foreboding words—

*“O! thou child of many prayers,  
Life hath quicksands—life hath snares,  
Sin and care come unawares.”*

And then she would press him to her heart and breathe gentle counsel to the child:—

*“Bear through sorrow, wrong, and ruth,  
In thy heart the dew of youth,  
On thy lips the smile of truth.”*

If you had seen him then with his large lustrous eyes raised to hers—with that longing, earnest look, that wondrous beauty beaming forth in its innocence and purity, you would have said, “No wonder she loves that child as she does; no wonder she looks forward to his becoming more and more what in her love she desires him to be.”

But we must leave the circle in the garden close to a bed of roses, and with sweetest odours wafted round them. The carriage is waiting for Lady Aubrey, who has promised to spend part of her afternoon with Mrs. de Vere.

“You have so much to tell me. I do not forget where you left off; I think you threatened to take me into a very ‘worldly world,’ and do you know that with you as my pioneer, I do not feel the least afraid

to venture into its mazes. I suppose they were very attractive?"

"Yes; there might have been danger there. It is so pleasant to be surrounded by all that is most perfect of its kind, that at last one's eyes become dazzled by the brilliancy of everything, and then it is more difficult to see what must be a concomitant in all that is perishable—the utterly unsatisfying nature of it all.

"Of course Cuthbert's high position elevated me also. I was fêted and caressed and extolled enough to have overset any one who had not been, like myself, forewarned and forearmed. I had just seen enough of the instability of popularity to make me undervalue it, and, to tell you the truth, I never cared for it myself, although if I saw the slightest declension in that sort of worship of Cuthbert, I was much annoyed.

"I believe I was impetuous, and ready sometimes to receive perverted impressions. This was the consequence of having been once too ready to admire every one who was engaging: there was something irresistibly captivating to me in the fascinations of voice and manner, and often the perfections went no further. There was no *basis* for my admiration—nothing which ought really to have attached me—and so there was nothing wonderful in the discoveries I

used to make about the unworthiness of my idols; but at the same time there was perhaps no excuse for the exaggerated terms of censure and disapprobation which I used to apply to the persons and sentiments which displeased me.

“I was too fastidious—too exacting. Why did I ever expect to meet with perfect *truth* and openness in a sphere where, to a certain degree, people must dissemble to be endured? I do believe that no one could be tolerated in society if the circles we moved in were even for one hour a day transformed into the ‘palace of truth,’ which was once fabled to our imaginations by a writer of the last century, where disguise was impossible and the lips were *forced* to utter the real thoughts and sentiments of the speakers, truth might dominate, sincerity glory in its liberty. Mais hélas! ‘La vérité, cette fille du ciel, vérité que la politesse tenait cachée dans son cœur,’ has but little scope for its sway in artificial life, where *appearances* are everything.”

“Well, I suppose it never would do to say all one thought, and besides our ideas may often be at variance with those of others, without their always being wrong; for we might not ourselves be right.”

“That is true; but you see that I had learnt from the earliest dawn of life to care for what was real, to admire what was genuine, and to shrink from every

species of falseness ; and the dislike to counterfeit was intuitive."

"Still I suppose in this world truth is so often blended with fiction, that it is difficult to separate them ; and then it is so pleasant to think that people really do care for one when they say they do."

"Ah! I don't want to shake your faith in the integrity of those whom you must from necessity associate with : I only want to account for my own apathy to the enchantments of life, and the bewitchments of many of those who shine in the spheres where we are led to expect superlative excellence ; for surely among persons of education, of elevated station, of pre-eminence in many ways, we naturally look for perfection in everything, and it used to disappoint me dreadfully when I found them not only inferior in goodness themselves, but ready to encourage those who ministered to their vanity, whether they were worthy or not. Toadies, who *are* despicable, every one must allow, are tolerated in a wonderful way. Take the Hawk as an example. Why is that man allowed free access to the homes of the most exclusive ? Only because he worships their greatness, adulates their wealth, and flatters them in every possible way."

"I suppose they don't detect the real nature of his devotion, and look upon it as a just tribute to their

attributes of benevolence and kindness—for they are always kind to him, I conclude?”

“There is great kindness, certainly, and some people may not be able to see clearly into the nature of the reptiles who frequent the paths of the prosperous.”

“Is it difficult to discover them?”

“Generally—they are so specious, so adroit, and know so exactly what weak points to fasten on; but I believe that the aptitude of people to be taken in by that sort of animal did not annoy me so much, or astonish me to the same degree, as the selfishness of many who ought to have known better. I assure you I have seen people so afraid of letting others benefit by their good taste, or their knowledge of the best ways of doing things, that I have been quite shocked: to be sure the sort of selfishness which occurs to my thoughts now is a failing to which women are more addicted than men. I have seen girls hide their new music, and have heard them tell actual falsehoods about their songs, rather than let others appropriate the same means of pleasing the world—I have known women purposely mislead the inquirer after some fashion or other which they were anxious to follow, or some adornment they wished to possess—I have seen people sedulously conceal from observation what they fancied others might wish to copy, and I have wondered at their inconsistency too,

for sometimes, to advance their own interests in any way, I have seen those very people most lavish of their attentions and their courtesies. To be sure it was not to those who *needed* them, but it was to the rich and great, who required nothing from their hands, that the offerings and their devotions were paid. I remember the Duchess of B—— saying that she thought she should like roses to be the chief floral adornment of her rooms at a party she projected giving early in June; and the ducal wish had no sooner been expressed than showers of roses fell at her grace's feet. Every garden in the neighbourhood of London, and even at a distance too, must have been despoiled to provide the immense quantities which were offered at her shrine. She might have walked on those so thickly strewn in her path; from morning to night she might have scattered them on the pavé before her door—even her grace's horses might have slept on beds of the softest and most fragrant, so profuse were the contributions bestowed—and yet I heard a meek petition 'for one rose, only one,' rejected by a lady who was sending her most beautiful flowers, all the brightest and sweetest she could gather in her conservatory, to a person of higher position than that of the modest pleader, who added, 'you know we have not one at home, and in town they are such a luxury.'

“It was curious to see how obliging people were who had younger sons to be patronized, or daughters to be noticed by those who were in power—how ready and how eager they were to take any trouble for the distinguished ones of the world; and yet how deadened they were in their perceptions of the wishes of those from whom they could gain nothing. Selfishness, self-interest, self-seeking, could easily be detected in many of the *flower-gatherers* of that day, as well as in the courtiers who thronged around the prosperous everywhere.

“There is something so revolting, too, to one’s feelings when we mark the change which is often so apparent in the manners shown to those who have, from any cause, descended from their high estate to one of less importance. I remember Lady A——, the widow of the great Lord A——, who had for so long filled one of the most exalted positions in the state and at our court, being almost forgotten by the very people who in her husband’s lifetime had been most devoted to her. She had retired from the world, as it was only natural the widow of such a man should do; but when her orphan grandchild, little Sylvia Seymour, required a sheltering wing on her introduction to society, and Lady A—— saw that it was her duty to forget self and to reenter the circles she had been so welcomed into formerly, she found, to her

astonishment, that she was *not* a person of the 'greatest consideration.' Of course many houses were opened to her and her pretty *débutante*, and invitations were not slow in their accumulation ; but she missed the *empresé* affection of former days, and could hardly understand why her reappearance in the world should not have been hailed with the same delight as heretofore when she was fêted at Court, invited continually to the entertainments given by Royalty, honoured by visits from the most illustrious of the realm, and looked upon by common consent as one of the most leading persons of the day.

"I was present when Sylvia, with the eagerness natural to a very young and ardent girl, was asking her grandmother to fix on the first drawing-room for her presentation. Her arguments were very rational — 'You say I must be presented first, that it is hardly etiquette to go anywhere till I have kissed Her Majesty's hand ; so the sooner I do so the better. It is a pity to lose so many nice balls—I dare say they are charming—and you know Madame B—— says I dance well enough now for anything.'

" 'I can quite imagine that, my dear child ; but do you know there is very little dancing at balls in general ?'

" 'Very little dancing ?'

" 'The rooms are so crowded, people can hardly

move; their beautiful dresses are often torn on the staircase, or so crushed that they are hardly fit to be seen; and then the heat is so intolerable.'

" 'Still, Grandy, I think they must be charming; so many people one knows would be at them, all one's friends, everybody one wants to meet; and then I hope so to be asked to the Queen's balls. I should not care so much about the concerts, but of course we should be invited to them too.'

" 'Very possibly; but, my darling, you must not expect too much; your anticipations of delight in all these new scenes may be disappointed. I wish as much as you do that this important matter of your presentation was well over;' and then, turning to me, Lady A—— added—

" 'You will think me quite absurd, but do you know that even the idea of going through the corridor, instead of having the entrée as formerly, unnerves me: and yet, perhaps, the less like to the past that every thing is, the better. I could not let the child take this first step on the threshold of what she thinks will be such a very happy life, under the care of any one else: indeed since the Dowager Lady Seymour's death there are none of our connections who could supply my place; I must make the effort.'

" 'I sincerely hope it will not be too much for you.'

“ When I saw her again it was just after the drawing-room. I thought I should like to know how she was, so, instead of going home to change my dress, I drove at once to Belgrave Square. There had been a great crowd. I had gone with Cuthbert ; and certainly it is a privilege to have the entrée. I was cool when others seemed flushed ; dear Lady A—— looked very pale when I went to her in her dressing-room. Sylvia, who was exquisitely pretty, and radiant from excitement, answered my inquiry after her chaperon by saying, ‘ Poor Grandy seems very tired, so she is going to rest quietly : we are going to N—— House to-night ; she will like to see you.’ ”

“ How graceful and dignified she looked in her calm grey tints and softening blonde ! She was taking off her diamonds as I went up to her, and I thought I saw a tear as bright as they were on that meek, sweet face.

“ ‘ I hope you are not exhausted, dear Lady A—— ? ’ ”

“ She did not answer immediately, but seemed to have some difficulty in unclasping her necklace ; her maid stepped forward, but she dismissed her, saying ‘ No, thank you, I can do it ; come back in an hour.’ ”

“ Presently she laid the sparkling gems one after another into the different compartments of her jewel-case, and then, with a half-suppressed sigh, she said,

‘I don’t think I shall ever wear them again: such scenes are not for me; it is all too much, too much; I had no idea that I could feel the change as I do.’

“‘Do you see so great an alteration in the arrangements during the last six years? I do not perceive them myself.’

“‘No, *you* can’t, of course: your position is not altered, mine is. I had deluded myself with the idea that for the very memory’s sake of him whose name I bear, I should be still an object of interest, and that, as on former days, I should be smiled on, kindly greeted, welcomed back again to the circle I had during his time been so caressed in, so attended to; I knew I could not be forgotten, and, in one sense, I was not; I was known by every one. But when the Lord Chamberlain read my card to the Queen, there was no responsive smile as there used to be; and when ‘Miss Seymour, by her grandmother, Lady A——,’ was the next intimation, I saw no expression of interest. Surely I might naturally enough have looked for *that*! I was not expecting too much. How almost invariably I had on former occasions, after curtsying to all the other royalties, been motioned into the circle near the throne! Oh! it was such a change! Indeed I never, never can again expose myself to the shock it all gave me; I almost felt as if the thoughts entertained of me had been, ‘Why

does she under her circumstances re-enter such scenes?—her place is no longer here; it was all very different in Lord A——’s lifetime.’

“‘Impossible, dear Lady A——. Do not think for an instant that any such thoughts could be conceived: besides, was not your reason for appearing again at court quite apparent? You went to present your grandchild; what could be more proper or more natural?’

“‘I thought so; but really, dear Mrs. de Vere, you cannot believe, unless you had seen them, what cold manners, what utter indifference, what almost impertinent *insouciance*, was shown me and my pretty Sylvia by the groups of courtiers; even she was not noticed. I expected one kindly smile for her at least; but no, there was not the most passing glance of interest bestowed; altogether, do not think me weak or unreasonable, but I have had a shock. I only hope my child will marry early, and then I shall be released from this duty at any rate.’

“‘Dearest Lady A——, you could not spare her.’

“‘Ah! I fear you are right there! *If* she leaves me too, *what shall I do?*’

“‘I stayed some time by my friend’s side; I could fully enter into her feelings, for it is a shock, at any age and under any circumstances, to see that the charm which once was cast around us has faded into

nothingness, that the hold we once fancied we possessed over others has proved so frail, and that our influence was so slight.

"It was just what many others had before experienced, but I felt indignant at the heartlessness of former friends, which was so glaring in this case. There were few in the world who had filled a very high station with such a perfect sense of her responsibilities, or who had from her kindness of disposition diffused so much happiness, as Lady A——. And I confess my impressions against 'the world and its worldliness,' its faithlessness and ingratitude, were stronger than ever after that day."

"Did she ever go to court again?"

"Never; she said it was not necessary."

"Was Sylvia as much enchanted by the vortex she wished to rush into as she expected?"

"No, I believe not; she was never invited to any of the royal balls that I heard of, but she was of course very much admired, and always seemed the brightest of human beings. She married very soon after her *début*, and is supremely happy, I hear. I don't believe she ever felt a shade of disappointment about anything. Lady A—— was sensitive for her, she never was so for herself."

"And the dear Grandy, where is she now?"

"In the country with her grandchild, who is almost

always at L——. Her husband is member for the county, and there never were greater blessings to all whom they can benefit than Mrs. Manners and her dear Grandy; they do so much good, and are much beloved. I see a good deal of them even now, for Lady A——, although she is advanced in years, has energy to meet every call on her kindness, and she never forgets me when she is in town.”

“I am afraid my time has expired. I am so sorry, for although I almost fear I have tired you, I feel as if I had not had any great insight yet into your past. How replete with instruction it is to me, and how much good it will do me to see with your eyes the real state of things! It is so much pleasanter to be guided by your experience than to be obliged to form my judgment on my own.”

“Still you see we are only on the outskirts of the regions you wish to penetrate into—*Au revoir.*”

## CHAPTER VIII.

“Une rose qu'on respire et qu'on jette, et qui meurt en tombant.”

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WHEN the friends met again, Mrs. de Vere said—  
“I felt, after you had left me the other day, as if I had been sketching out my experiences in tints of too deep a shade, and that in my endeavours to be accurate I had verged on severity towards those I had been most conversant with. I would rather not impress you *against* the world in general, for it would be casting a veil of prejudice over your eyes, and I remembered that I had set out by telling you that, although there were exceptions, there was much to love and admire amongst the circles we were dilating on.”

“Yes; you made me almost feel as if I had been premature in my own deductions, and yet I formed them from what I had really seen and heard.”

“Still, you see, we are so apt to let our own individual feelings affect our general views, and it is not quite just to do so, especially when we are assuming a right to guide others, and you must not

forget that mine are records of the *past*. Even a few years make a great difference in the advance of science and of art, and so it is only right to believe that whilst *intellect* is gaining ground everywhere, the more important discipline of the heart is not neglected: people *ought* to grow better and better the longer they live."

"But do they?"

"We must hope the best."

"I can't say that, from what I have seen, the present generation is, on the whole, more to be admired than those you associated with," replied Clara. "It does not strike me that evil feelings are more tightly curbed, or bad dispositions and inclinations controlled."

"And your experience is more recent than mine. Still, one of my ideas is that the influence of the clergy being so much greater in the present day than it was formerly, good must ensue. My friend Alice Bligh is always tracing the goodness of *her* friends to that source, and, under the Divine blessing, it must avail much. Alice is not of our church; she is by descent and hereditary right, by education, principle, and inclination a Romanist, and one of the most excellent of human beings; she insists that if we clung more closely to *our* spiritual guides than we do, we should be more able to avoid temptation,

but that relying as we do on ourselves we are easy victims to our common enemy.

“‘The Prince of Evil,’ she says, ‘does not wage war more openly against me than he does against you, but I go to my priest and say, Guide me, help me, strengthen me; I tell him of my erring ways, I open my contrite heart, I implore his intercession for my forgiveness, I show him all my need, and he first takes me to the light, reveals to me the true state of my own heart, tells me how to atone and how to guard my spirit for the future from sin, and then, soothed by forgiveness, I go out to the world healed of my wounds, and with an undistracted mind. You talk of *our* mental reservation; we conceal nothing from our spiritual guides, but you walk through life irresolutely, because you lean on your own strength; you say that that strength flows from a source which is infallible, and so it is when you obtain it; but I go out refreshed in spirit to face temptation and peril, because I *cannot* forget *Who* it is that conquers for me; you go struggling on, feeling your own weakness, acknowledging it to the world in general, as well as in the privacy of your devotions, and yet it always appears to me that there is an uncertainty, a sort of faltering in your steps, because you do not avail yourselves of the help your priests could give you if you asked for it.’

"I never disputed with Alice Bligh, for I knew that she believed *us* to be in darkness whilst she was walking in the light; but I felt that she was right when she said that we might have had help which we never sought; it was so in my day, it is not so now; there is a much more intimate connexion between the pastors and their flocks, more freedom of communion, less reserve and less pride; people do seek the teaching of their 'spiritual masters' now, and listen meekly to counsel and instruction, so, as I said before, they ought to be better, goodness ought to preponderate, and not to be the exceptional case instead of the general one.

"Sister Alice did my sister Mary, who was connected to her by marriage, much good, and yet controversy was interdicted by mutual consent, and as steady adherents to the principles of their own church they respectively trod the paths of purity and peace, fulfilling their duties to others with singleness of spirit, and rejoicing under the same beneficent mercy which is over all who serve the same divine Master. But this is like a digression from our main topic; my thoughts revert to my sisters when I look back to the period from which I must take examples and illustrations of my ideas.

"After we lost my dear mother they came to live with us. Cuthbert was a most affectionate brother

to them, and in our home they had many advantages; they were both very engaging in manners and appearance: you can judge of the latter from that picture." And Mrs. de Vere pointed to one at the side of the room, representing a group of three sisters.

Clara knew that the tallest was a likeness of her friend; she had never seen the others, but it was easy to trace the closest resemblance; there was the same graceful development of figure, the Grecian contour of feature, the open brow, the full blue eye, so expressive of truth and goodness, that whilst you looked you felt invited to fullest confidence in the graciousness and candour that so clearly beamed forth from them.

"Our lives flowed on in a very even course, they were such charming companions, with their pure upright minds and their unaffected simplicity. We were very happy together. My great interest in the world then sprang from my anxiety about them and my pleasure in them; I lost the sense of weariness which had before hung over me when in general society, for we had sympathy with each other and interest in almost every thing: their bright enjoyment of the passing pleasures of life, and their appreciation of all that was really worthy of admiration, added immensely to my own; there is something unspeakably delightful in the reciprocity of feeling between sisters: even trifles become sources

of amusement, and association of ideas brings out that sort of hilarity and lightness of spirit which form a sort of *entourage* to the commonest events of life.

“It is a pity that such bonds do not last for ever. Mary and Harriet were even more to each other than I could possibly be to them—they leant more on each other: their interests and affections seemed entwined so closely, that it would be impossible to separate them; and yet the course of events divided them.

“Mary married Mr. Launceston, Lord Cornwall’s eldest son, and became naturally enough one of a large family circle with whom we were never very intimate. We liked Edmund very much, and as she was devotedly attached to him, there could be no objection raised on our parts excepting that his politics differed widely from Cuthbert’s. Disraeli alludes in one of his works to ‘political antipathies,’ and I believe they are the strongest people ever form—they never seem to get over them; and it was on subjects connected with the ministry that the brothers-in-law differed. Mary and I tried to keep the matters on which their feelings were at variance in the background; but with all our care we did not always succeed, and clouds gathered which disturbed the hitherto unvarying serenity of our days. We felt this very much, and Harriet always said, ‘I will

take care to find out what my husband is before I enrol myself amongst the matrons of England.'

"I believe in her case everything would have been smooth enough if it had not been for the envy and jealousy her prospects excited. Sir Everard Harley was the great *parti* of the day, and I assure you I was quite shocked at the spite and almost *malevolence* of many whom, till then, she had numbered amongst her friends.

"She could not be forgiven for having attracted and secured the devotion of the very person who had been appropriated by each of six of her companions to herself, and they gave themselves the fullest latitude in their dislike to her and their animadversions on her. It was very distressing: his own sister, who had been her intimate friend, became alienated from her, and you know when people are prejudiced against another, however blameless that other may be, it is very difficult to remove the impression.

"Sir Everard and Edmund Launceston were violently opposed to each other in politics, and this has imperceptibly separated the sisters—at least to a great degree it has done so. I bring them together as often as I can, and interdict public topics; but I always see that there is less demonstration of affection between them, and I feel that the reality of its existence is therefore to be doubted. To be sure they

are both absorbed by their own families ; but it makes me very sad when I look back to the happy union of former days and then contrast them with the present. Mary says, 'I am afraid of trusting Edmund and Everard together. Cuthbert I do not mind so much, for although he does not think as Edmund does, he is so grand—there is such a sublimity about him—that Eddy can't help admiring him ; but really, when Harriet is with us, I am always trembling for the consequence.'

"There is a great deal of envy, and malice, and uncharitableness in the world, I fear. I had no idea till I saw those evil passions working under the impetus of rivalry, as they did in my dear Harriet's case, that they were so virulent in their nature ; but I don't like to speak of such matters—I would rather dwell exclusively on the memory of those who never yielded themselves up to the influence of anything excepting goodness, and there were many such amongst our chosen friends. I could tell you of such perfect wives and mothers—such *heroines* under the vicissitudes of private life—such patterns of excellence in every way—whose very eminence was a blessing to the world they lived in, because by that they let their light shine before it.

"I never was disappointed in any of them : true as friends they always were, and dear to my soul

they must ever be. Many of those whom I loved and honoured most have been removed from their happy homes on earth to their glorious inheritance in heaven. Some are still left to shed blessings on the circles they belong to ; but they are now far from me—our paths have become different. I do not see them—months pass and I do not hear of them ; but my spirit bears me forward to the eternity which we shall all enter on, and I check my sighs and regrets for present separation by looking forward to that state which, although veiled in mystery and beyond our conceptions, is, we know, one where nothing evil can enter, and where no element adverse to harmony and peace can dwell.

“ We cannot live in society without forming friendship : it seems an indispensable fraction of those qualities which make the whole earthly scene attractive to our natures, and it is of great consequence to the young whom they choose as friends.

“ It is very curious to watch the various tendencies and tastes of others. My own ideas of what was charming were indissolubly connected with what was refined, and I am afraid I carried my predilection too far sometimes ; and yet instances of the most perfect simplicity, artlessness, and genuine goodness had come before me *invariably* united with that

beguiling charm, so it was impossible for me to avoid its influence.

“One thing I could not understand, and that was the ascendancy gained by those who had only reached the position they held by steady steps on the *ladder of gold*. Why people were to be admired for being rich I could not make out; why they were to be caressed and extolled, just because they could place millions in their bankers’ hands and blaze out before the world in diamonds of the first water, whilst their equipages were magnificent, their tables loaded with silver and gold, and their retinues almost princely, I could not comprehend. And yet how often in this country do we see that wealth is the only passport needed to the first circles!

“I like everything to be perfect in its kind, and the jewel ought to be in keeping with its setting. But alas! there is a great difference too often perceptible, and the richly gilded is not always of intrinsic value. I do not insist on what I have heard some affirm, that ‘good birth is an absolutely necessary concomitant in the persons you associate with,’ because that is a gift of Providence denied to many who are at the same time worthy of the highest places in the land. They may rise—they have risen from an obscurity which will in time be as utterly

forgotten by us, as by their descendants; but inasmuch as I have often traced high-mindedness, generosity, and real greatness of character amongst those who had no need to grovel for distinction, simply, because they were born to it; I have also seen cringing and fawning servility betrayed by those who were low in their origin, and who, therefore, with the untowardness of human nature, worshipped and envied the unattainable.

“I remember a very wealthy couple who attracted my attention first because they were pleasing in manner, having imbibed from education a certain degree of elevation of mind. I liked their good-humoured bearing, and although their respective antecedents were humble enough—their direct progenitors having been common bricklayers and coal-merchants—I never thought of the fact till they became very rich indeed, and then nature burst forth. They turned their backs on the less prosperous, repelled the courtesies of those who were not distinguished by anything but their good birth and their excellence, and fawned upon the noble and the wealthy: they aggrandized *themselves* in every possible way, copied the style of their superiors in rank, but did no public or private good to those whom they might have been privileged to assist, from the fact of former acquaintance.

"This was only one instance of many—the pride of wealth is as common as it is intolerable.

"The democrat who reviles at nobility, tears down its insignia, sneers at high birth and distinction, but who, if the scales were reversed and he obtained for himself what he discountenances in others, would domineer, tyrannize, and out-Herod Herod, has perfect sympathy with that sort of person and pride: analyze them and their actions, and you will find it so.

"Some there are, I rejoice to say, who, remembering that they are stewards set over the possessions they are entrusted with, do much good—who make the best use of their endowments, and attract our admiration in consequence. They are high-minded enough, too, to add dignity to the station which Providence has placed them in, and the simplicity of their goodness and their single-mindedness win our respect.

"You have had a glance, young as you are, at the real state of things: you have seen how poverty, in all its shades, is despised. In ancient times, according to the laws of Draco and Solon, &c., it was even punished with death, till Plato, with his gentle, kindly nature, stepped forward and said, 'Don't do *that*; only *banish* the miscreant!' A writer of the present day (a foreigner), in depicting England and its habits, states as a fact, that 'English people are

locked up every night and day when they happen to be poor:’ so you see,” added Mrs. de Vere, smiling, “you and I must take care, or we shall be banished from society.”

“I am rather inclined, as I have told you, to retire with a good grace. That evening, at the — Embassy, I felt as if I had had a hint given me, which, as it happens, accident has improved upon, for I have not been out since. But I wish you would describe one of your friends to me—you say some of them were so charming.”

“Well, if I have time, I will tell you about the last person of the world and in it to whom I attached myself. I wish that with one *coup de plume* I could do her justice, but that is impossible; I mean as to her beauty; I will only say that it was exquisite, that her voice was most lovely, her manner bewitching, her fascinations innumerable. I must deal in superlatives in talking of her. I had known Flora Desmond long before her marriage to Lord D——, and circumstances in after life threw us continually together. She was very amusing, and attracted much notice by her witticisms, which were repeated from one to another of her admiring friends till we became tired of the echo. She was not often severe, and so she was rarely checked in her flow of spirits, which were, indeed, inexhaustible. Cuthbert used

to say she was 'too sparkling for daylight, but in the evening she refreshed him.' We were very open with each other, and I generally retorted if she animadverted on myself, or others whose part I felt inclined to take, with an attack on her own weak points. I often told her that she 'attached undue importance to position, and that if any of her friends fell from their high estate, owing to political changes or any event of that nature, she would desert them — that she was sure to turn her back upon them in some adroit way, if she did not do so openly.' She generally laughed, and emphatically denied the accusation. Even when I reproached her, I did not, I am sure, *really* think that she would ever prove a renegade. I cannot go much into detail now, but you shall see how utterly I was enchained by her ; that is to say, how entirely from early habit and from affection I gave myself up to her influence and allurements ; how I used to defend her and screen her fair name from opprobrium ! She was so reckless, and sometimes so careless of the feelings of others, that she could not always escape censure ; but I generally contrived to turn the current of general opinion in her favour, and she retained her popularity ; *it* was very dear to her, and I believe she was quite aware that it was of consequence to her to possess my friendship, for she took every pains to do so, and she

quite adulated Cuthbert. Years passed on, Lady Desmond and Mrs. de Vere were always coupled together, and their opinions continually quoted. Of course the Hawk I told you of was one of her worshippers. She concealed her aversion to him (if she had any, but this I doubted), for she liked flattery; and, as she often said, she 'heard enough of truth and its stern maxims from Cuthbert and myself, she did not see much harm in the poor bird, and wondered at my dislike.' My memory takes me back to the summer of 18—; Parliament would go on sitting and plodding notwithstanding the heat, and so even I, who never left Cuthbert alone in town, was persuaded by him to go with some other friends to join the Desmonds at S——. I did not originally mean to stay more than a week, but when I talked of going, the remonstrances against my doing so were so very vehement that I was forced to alter my plans. I heard, too, from home daily, and I saw that my husband was too much engrossed by public affairs to miss me; so I yielded myself up a willing victim to Flora's fascinations and the enchantments of the circle at S——, to say nothing of the gentle breezes and beautiful country scenes which I delighted in.

"There was one organ wanting in my structure—that of 'locality.' I was apt to lose my way and

to become irretrievably puzzled in some houses. There were more intricacies in the old Elizabethan chateau of S—— than in any other I ever was in. Even the constant inhabitants of the place were perplexed sometimes, and I heard Lord D—— himself say that Rosamond's Labyrinth was nothing to the cross passages and winding staircases in his ancestral pile. Flora knew my failing, and 'never could trust me,' as she said, alone. It was always quoted against me when she was retaliating upon me after any of my gentle remonstrances with her; 'how could I pretend to guide her, when I could not even find my way up to my own room without assistance? she had a great mind to leave me to myself some night, and if she did she was sure to find me shivering the next morning in the most out of the way corner in the house.' This is *à propos* to a scene that I have tried in vain to forget. There were several of my particular associates, and one or two very brilliant persons, staying with the D——s. They had the power of collecting celebrities; and with an intuitive perception of ability, and a great appreciation for talent, I was thought just the person to be fit for those réunions. I was a good listener, and *that* was a great point in my favour. I had no reason to complain of want of consideration in any way, and the hours were fleeting away in the most agreeable manner, when I

received a few hurried lines from Cuthbert to say he could not join me at S——, as had been proposed, and he added a few words about public affairs, which were eagerly listened to by all the great people, for his dictum was all-important in their eyes. I had decided on my immediate return to town, and had ordered post-horses to be ready as soon as possible after breakfast, but on being asked to do a good-natured thing, and give Lady Adelaide B—— a place in my carriage, and as she could not travel early in the day, to postpone my departure till after luncheon, I altered my plans. The Hawk was one of the &c. &c. &c. which had been added to the circle within the last few days, and obsequious as he generally was to the great people of the day, he was not likely, notwithstanding my repellings, to forget my relationship to the exalted de Vere; and he kept hovering about, to my annoyance, till the very day before that on which I meant to leave S——. He was, indeed, a bird of ill omen! By the late post many letters of interest had arrived, and the recipients seemed greatly absorbed by their contents; but the conversation was of necessity general, and I did not listen with much interest to it. I never ‘talked politics’ with any one but Cuthbert; I have told you why it was better to avoid the topic when my sisters were our guests; and although I had my own indi-

vidual interests in public affairs from sympathy with my husband, I felt reserved about betraying his opinions before the world in general.

“Once or twice that evening I had observed on my joining any of the different groups who were earnest in conversation, that they changed the subjects of it. Lady Desmond did this so abruptly in one instance, that I could not help saying ‘Don’t let me interrupt you, Flora: if you have secrets I won’t disturb you.’

“One of Lady D——’s great faults in my eyes was that she was capricious; I had often remonstrated with her about her manner to others, and I had said, ‘You have more than once shown caprice towards me, but I warn you that I never expose myself to that sort of thing a third time.’

“It was not fancy; there was a difference in her manner towards me that evening. Her invariable habit had been to accompany me to my room at night, and to stay as long as she could, discussing things and people, and any subject which came into her head. That night—the last we were to be together before my return home—she left me at Lady Adelaide’s door, whose room was next to my own, and there I heard them talking till it was quite late. My faith in her friendship was so strong, that this little symptom of variableness gave me no un-

easiness ; I simply remarked it, and made no comment. I was late the next morning at breakfast, and, after hurrying it over, I went into the flower-garden, where I met little Georgina, Lady D——'s youngest child, who ran eagerly towards me, saying, 'It's dear Mrs. de Vere ; how glad I am to see you can walk ! Were you much hurt ? I hope not ; but I thought you were never coming.' (I had promised to meet the dear child before her lesson began, and we were great friends.) I told her 'I could not imagine what she meant ;' when she replied, 'Oh ! I thought you had had an accident ; I heard Mr. Hawk say to mamma, 'What a fall for Mrs. de Vere !' and she said, 'Yes, indeed ; I don't think she will ever get over it ; she is not the sort of person to bear it well ;' so I took it into my head that you had tumbled down ; I am so glad you did not.' And then she went off to her flowers, and I had no opportunity of saying more, for Lady D—— and a group with her came down the terrace-stairs. I was on the point of asking if any one had met with a disaster, when the Hawk came hopping up to her, and as I always disliked taking part in any conversation in which he joined, I retired to the house to finish a sketch I had begun the day before. Some one in the room offered me the papers which had just arrived, but I was too busy with my pencil, so I only said

‘I shall hear enough of public matters when I go home ; thank you, I won’t trouble myself with them now.’

“The hour for my departure was drawing near, and I remember saying as I left the room, ‘I will go up stairs till luncheon-time ; there are always little things to see about at the last, and my maid is not very bright ;’ and, turning to Lady Adelaide who had just come in, I added, ‘I hope it won’t hurry you too much if we set out an hour hence.’ She assured me that she should be quite ready.

After arranging my books and work, &c. &c. for packing, and my dress for travelling, I left my room and walked leisurely down what I thought was the right staircase ; but when I opened the door at the bottom of it I found myself on an unknown landing-place. I turned to the left, then to the right, opened another door, crossed an inner court, which led into another, mounted a narrow steep staircase, and then fancied I had reached that part of the house which opened into a corridor and led to the picture gallery. Alas, alas, I was in *terra incognita*, without a hope of extrication ! Courts, staircases, doors, winding passages, narrow outlets, bewildered me at every turning ; the servants were all at dinner, and much too absorbed to hear me if I shouted. At last in my despair, on hearing the sound of carriage-wheels, I

thought I would go into the first room I could reach, and ring the bell.

“Firm in this purpose, I looked eagerly around; but I was in a passage which had on either side blank walls: it was lighted by a skylight, so I saw that I had in my last flight upwards reached a higher position than I had started for.

“My perplexities increased when I saw that one of the doors at the extreme end before me belonged to a housemaid’s closet: it was open enough to show me the usual implements. I walked up to the other—that opened on a square space dedicated to coals!

“I was becoming utterly exhausted. I could not well rest on the pile before me, for my dress was of light-coloured muslin; so in despair I returned to the outlet by which I had entered.

“I found myself in a region dedicated to boots and shoes: the odour was quite overpowering.

“I made another despairing effort, and reached a short flight of steps which led to the china room, and on those steps I rested. ‘What shall I do?’ had been uttered by my lips repeatedly in my wanderings through this interminable maze: now it burst from my very heart, and with a piteous ‘*what shall I do?*’ I bounded forward to the right, traversed another passage, strong in my resolve to enter the very first room I could reach in order to get at a bell. Excepting

my own, Lady Desmond's, and that of my projected companion, Lady A——, I knew none of them ; but there was no time to be lost. I made an inroad into the first I saw, and opened the door at once. To my horror, there stood the Hawk without his coat : it was his room I had invaded. In my confusion I said, 'Is luncheon over?'

" 'It is, and your carriage is at the door.'

" 'I have lost my way : this house always puzzles me so—I am afraid it is late ; I must have been nearly an hour rambling about.'

" The Hawk seemed inclined to be facetious, and *that* I could not stand ; so I said—

" 'If you will just point out the great staircase to me, I can find my way.'

" 'Every one has been wondering where you were.'

" I made no reply (I thought they might have sent after me), but I walked on. I heard a buzzing sound of voices and a good deal of laughing. I was ready for my journey. The people who were talking were evidently in the outer hall : there was a sort of carved screen, all open work towards the top, and from that issued voices which reached me. I distinctly heard Lady D—— say, 'She must have lost herself ; she would not be so late in setting out, although she does know nothing.'

"Then some one asked, 'Does she not know about the telegraphic message?'

" 'How could she? she has been missing for the last hour.'

" 'What a downfall! What we heard yesterday is quite confirmed, is it not?'

" 'I should think so: the words were—"Ministers have resigned." They are out—that's enough; her high mightiness of de Vere won't like it.'

" 'No, that she won't, I know'—from Flora Desmond.

" 'How stupid of her to lose her way! We shall be late'—from Lady Adelaide.

" 'How provoking! so stupid, so tiresome; just like her'—from Lady Desmond.

"It struck me at once whose 'downfall' they were talking of. Cuthbert was 'out'—dear Cuthbert! I had never for an instant anticipated the revolution in our affairs which this would produce. I felt quite stupified, and of course opened the wrong door. The occupants of the hall were all standing with their backs towards me, looking at the equipage and the four horses. It was a custom at S—— not to 'speed the parting guest,' but rather to impede—it was something to do. In a country house people are not particular about their ways of using flying moments. I heard one more comment from Lady D——: 'It is of

no use sending after her; she has lost her luncheon, but that is her affair. Four horses! yes, she always liked that sort of thing. It will all be over now, however; pride must have a fall.'

"I stepped forward, made hasty adieus to the circle, saying, 'I had not a moment to lose,' motioned to Lady Adelaide to take her place, took Flora's cold hand, bent my face to hers to receive the parting kiss, and only said to her, in a low emphatic voice, '*Et tu, Brute!*'"

## CHAPTER IX.

“And I was not, I thank Heaven,  
Made as some, to read them through;  
Were life three times longer even,  
There are better things to do.”

O. M.

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“My first feeling,” resumed Mrs. de Vere, “was, if the faithless Flora has plunged a dagger into my heart, I too have placed one in hers; if she has a conscience, I have reached it, and my parting words will rankle there for ever.

“My second was for Cuthbert. I could hardly divine how he would look upon the event I had just heard of—whether it would be a disappointment or an emancipation from toil. He had never wearied in his daily labour, and his cheerful devotion to his duty had left me no room for disquietude about a course which, although it robbed him of leisure, enabled him to dispense benefits on his country at large.

“He was the champion of the oppressed, the unflinching redresser of wrongs, and the resolute advocate for all that was good. I knew that his resigna-

tion of power would be deplored by many; but whether *he* would regret it himself I hardly knew. Perhaps it would shock him to see that measures he had projected would now most probably fail; but I could not tell what the depth of his philosophy on that point was, for I had never seen it tried. If it was to be a distress to him, the sooner I was with him the better. Impatience to get on was my next impulse.

"I had not spoken to my travelling companion; but I felt that my silence could not continue. She was fond of talking: it was no matter what subject was selected. I asked her, 'if she had heard the exact words of the telegraphic message which had, I supposed, been sent by Lord Desmond, who had started, I knew, for town by daybreak?'

" 'It was simply, Ministers have resigned.'

" 'Were people astonished?'

" 'No; it was expected after the debate yesterday.'

" 'I had heard nothing.'

" 'No; so we supposed from your composure: *we* all of us knew what was impending after the post came in yesterday.'

" 'I wonder no one told me.'

" 'Why, you see we all thought that it would shock you, and Lady Desmond advised us to say nothing.'

" 'Very strange of Lady Desmond.'

“ ‘She said that it would be a dreadful blow to you, and that you would, of course, look to her for sympathy, and she had none to offer—that she never knew how to condole with people.’

“ ‘And yet we have been like sisters together from very early days. I ‘don’t understand her; but it does not signify.’

“I leant back in the carriage and said nothing: why it was to be such ‘a dreadful blow’ to myself I could not quite understand. If it was a calamity, the pain would not be confined to Cuthbert’s relatives—the regrets would be spread far and wide; I should have plenty of sympathy, much more than I desired.

“My thoughts turned to the wound which had been inflicted on myself by hands I had trusted, and then I did, indeed, feel a pang.

“I could never have believed it of *her*. Had we not ‘walked together as friends and held sweet converse together’ almost all our lives? Had we not shared each other’s joys, and the sorrows, too, of our respective lots? Had not our hearts been opened to each other without reserve?—our very natures, and tastes, and pursuits, had blended us into one! I had told her how versatile she was in some points; but I never suspected that there could exist a shade of variableness in her affection towards *myself*. I had

told her that she cared too much for the grandeur of her friends—that she valued their rank and their possessions for them more than they did for themselves ; but I never for an instant imagined that she valued *me* for either, and that without them I should be less estimable in her eyes. I was greatly shocked.

“ I looked back to the pleasure I had had in her—the pride I had felt in her talent, in her beauty, in her power of enchaining others by her enchantments ! and I shrank from the review. What had all her fascinations been to me ? A blind to my judgment—a cloud obscuring my vision and darkening my understanding.

“ But self-deception was over now ! What, trust *her* again ? Never ! She might hereafter beseech for the return of my friendship ; but she should plead in vain. I could harden my heart as well as other people : I should never think now of trusting any one. Thank goodness I *could* be callous ; and I *would*. Ah ! it was easy to *say*—not to *do*. In a moment I was weeping in very bitterness of spirit—lingering affection for her, too—love which I could not utterly root out of my heart even whilst I acknowledged to myself that I despised her.

“ Lady Adelaide looked at me : she saw the tears flowing fast. She had a kind heart, although it was, people said, a worldly one. She had some sympathy

in her nature: she put out her hand and pressed mine. Presently she said—

“‘Dear Mrs. de Vere, does it vex you so very much?’

“‘Ah, yes, very much.’

“‘Did you never look forward to it?’

“‘Never.’

“‘Well, I can quite understand that it is a great shock to you: do you think Mr. de Vere will feel it very much?’

“‘Mr. de Vere,’ I said, in rather a startled voice—  
‘Oh! I was not thinking of him; something quite different, I assure you.’

“‘Oh! I only thought that you might feel it—that you might miss all the *greatness* of the position you will now descend from: it would only be natural.’

“‘As to that,’ I said, ‘till I have realized it, I cannot possibly tell what “the downfall” which I now remember at S—— all the people were alluding to will cost either of us. My present idea is that it will be no great distress to my husband: he will think it all right, and be quite contented.’

“‘I suppose he is a philosopher, then? I wish Atherly was one too; but I am afraid we shall all lead a pretty life of it. Now that he will be out of office he is sure to be dreadfully cross, and my poor sister will have to leave her nice house in the Admiralty. Such a pity—it is all so comfortable; and

then they will be so poor again. I assure you I think this change of ministry dreadful ; it will make a frightful difference to many of us.'

"And so she talked on and rambled in her discourse, sometimes remarking in a sage way about the changes in the world : then alluding to some of the people who were at S——, wondering if I admired so and so, winding up with—'and it is quite curious to see that nothing ever changes dear Lady Desmond ; she is always the same—so young, so pretty, so charming, so kind.'

"I made no reply. We soon reached our journey's end, and even if we had not, my grief was one I would not expose to her or to any one else, indeed. I might perhaps some day, when he had time to listen, tell Cuthbert of the new experience I had had ; but in the mean time I should certainly do my best to forget it.

"I found Cuthbert just as I expected, and ready to enter with interest into our new occupations, which were for the time rather engrossing. We had a great many things, and people, too, to think of ; for on leaving D—— street we altered the whole ménage, and as soon as we could we fixed ourselves here. It was a good distance from town, and Cuthbert, of course, retained his seat in the House, so still had public duties to attend to.

“An energetic mind like his could not all at once sink into inaction, and he has from that time given much of his mental power and attention to institutions for the good of others, or subjects whose end was the general benefit of his fellow-creatures. He is never idle and never weary of exertion when he can do a kindness to those who need it.

“We lead a very peaceful life—the great events of it are domestic. Dudley and his sweet little wife with their children come to us very often: *he* is a source of bright enjoyment to us all. Then our married daughters are as much as possible with us, and little Rosa, you know, helps us as well as she can in what interests us most. I assure you that I feel as if my life now, uneventful as it is, has charms attending it greater than any I ever knew when I was living in the world, although I confess I sometimes feel, under the weight of increasing infirmities, that I can do very little, and that little very imperfectly; and then weariness steals over my spirits—a weariness which is, however, dispelled when I remember that every day brings me nearer to the threshold of another state. And then, if I look back, the interests of the scenes I have left for ever gradually fade from my memory—

‘And the tints as gently sink away  
As a departing rainbow’s ray.’

"I feel as Milton did about his blindness, that the powers of my mental vision being to a great degree obscured, I am impelled to concentrate their remaining force on the prospects which will close my pilgrimage on earth, and I plead, like him, for gleams from above—

‘So much the rather thou, celestial Light,  
Shine inward, and the mind through all her pow’rs  
Irradiate!’

And it is such a blessing not to be distracted by worldly cares. Then very pleasant it is, too, as you have often felt, to be permitted to ease the burdens of others: you will see this more and more as you go on your own course, and you will value more and more the great privilege of being permitted to do so. You have not, I fear, gathered much from my experience; but you remember that I candidly warned you that the tissue I had to unravel had no beauty in it to beguile your senses. I told you too that I should be tedious: *there* I have not disappointed you. I am quite ashamed of having kept you so long listening to my stupid theories and personal impressions; but you brought them on yourself, my dear child."

Of course Clara reiterated her deep sense of obligation to the *raconteuse*, and her assurance that all she had heard was sure to do her lasting good. It is quite true that she did recur to the subjects which

had been brought before her, and learnt from them that in her own path there had as yet been no events which are not common to all, and that she also took a greatly increased interest in the duties and employments of her life.

We will leave our matured friend in her calm retreat close to the bow-window, thinking of all the kind things she can still do, and the ways in which she can lighten the labours of others.

And Clara, too, in her home we part from for the present : it has a very peaceful, pleasant atmosphere ! She is so bright and cheerful when Edgar returns from town—so ready to enter into all his interests and to share his remaining anxieties, for there are still a few lingering about him—and she sings so sweetly to her father, who is very fond of listening to her strains, although his eyes do sometimes fill with tears when those very strains take him into past scenes. To her mother she is the kindest, gentlest, most engaging companion, and to the small hermit what a loving, thoughtful mother she ever seems ! whilst he, bright little blessing, is a source of delight to all—wondrous in beauty and goodness. As old Dalton says, “ Master Aubrey is a young gentleman. to be sure ;” if she spoke French she would add, “ *Comme il y en à peu.*”

Then Clara is so good to the poor, so judicious and

active, and her sweet voice, when she speaks comfort to them, however oppressed they may be, is so soothing, that she seems to lull all their ills to rest.

They are not richer—rather poorer ; but they are quite contented. She did say one morning, when Sir Edgar inadvertently (for he forgot the exact state of the privy purse) wished that they could all go to Paris for a little change, and then on to Switzerland—“ And so we will when I, like Midas, can turn everything I touch to gold.”

*“ Revenons à nos moutons.”*

It has been a dreary time at Darlton, and to trace events we must make a retrograde, and rather a long one, too. This will take us back to the interview between the brothers, which Laura had alluded to.

Augustus listened very patiently to all the revelations poor Harry felt compelled to make, when the latter said, “ Thank you, Guss, for letting me take up both your time and attention in this way.” The reply was, “ It is little enough to do for you, Hal ; I must think seriously how I can assist you in a more substantial way. Come to me to-morrow after breakfast ; I will see Smith, the Ferney agent, to-day, and find out how one can get at immediate supplies, for, after all, that is the great object.”

The brothers discussed indifferent matters for some minutes, and then separated.

Harry's mind was to a certain degree relieved, for hope was dawning on him. As he walked along the gallery he said to himself—

“I hope to goodness Smith will be able to produce a good round sum, for any which falls far short of what I need will be useless to me: and yet it is too much to expect that even Guss, princely fellow as he is, will be able to do all I want. Oh! how I wish—I wish—”

But he had reached the door of his mother's morning room, and whether in sorrow or gladness, if his steps followed the dictates of his heart they generally led him to her.

He tapped gently at the door, and then, without pausing for the permission to enter, which he knew would be accorded, he opened the door, and heard the last ejaculation which escaped his mother's lips of—“What shall I do?”

Laura was standing at her side with a paper which looked like a bill. Mrs. Hall went on:—“I cannot, indeed I cannot ask your father, after what he said this very morning! How could I possibly distress him by another application for money? It cost me enough, Heaven knows, to touch upon the subject then; and this bill—I really cannot show him. Did

you say they were actually waiting in the house for an answer ? ”

“ Yes, dear mamma ; but don’t vex yourself so. Argles must wait ; I am sure you never asked him or any one else to do so before ; shall I go down and speak to him ? ”

“ No, dearest, that would never do.”

“ What is it, mother ? perhaps I can help you.”

“ I fear not, dear Hal : you will need all you can get, all you have for yourself, perhaps.”

“ But tell me what it is ; it is dreadful to see you distressed about money, or anything else ; do tell me ! ”

“ May I, mamma ? ” said Laura.

Mrs. Hall bent her head, and the packet was put into Harry’s hands.

“ I must explain first,” she said, “ that mamma gave Argles an order to refurnish the lodge for poor old Adam and Sally, and it was done this autumn, not very long ago ; so this bill has not been long due. Argles was employed because he is the only person at Ferney that does that general sort of business really well, and mamma did not expect to be asked for the thirty-five pounds this has cost till summer ; the other bill is from Grant, for clothing for the school-children ; that amounts to twenty-six pounds : you see it is only sixty-one pounds altogether. Is it not shocking to have her vexed about such a sum as that ? ”

“It is, indeed!”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Hall, “it does seem small; but, my dear children, all things go by comparison. It would have been nothing, as you say, six months ago, but now—when, as your dear father tells me, he is likely to find it a difficult matter to produce even the tenth part of what we have always hitherto spent annually, and when he told me too, not an hour ago, when I asked him for a couple of hundreds, that he hardly knew which way to turn, such enormous demands were made on him just at present, even this sixty-one pounds frightens me; he looked so pale too, and I am sure he did not sleep more than an hour last night. Oh! it is very sad! I can’t bear to see him in perplexity, to which there appears to be no end, and to hear his very voice *with tears in it!* Oh! that voice!—I can’t forget it!”

She leant back on her sofa, looking so faint that Laura was alarmed, and, turning to Harry, said—

“Fly up stairs and get the sal volatile, and bring a glass, a spoon, and the water-bottle.”

He was off that instant.

In passing his own room, the door of which was open, he rushed in and seized the purse which was lying on the table; in another moment he was holding the glass to Laura, who said—

“This will revive her.”

"Do you feel less faint, dearest mamma?"

Harry took the cold little hand and then kissed it. Perhaps it was this act which overcame her, for she burst into tears.

Harry was quite overcome.

"My dearest mother, it quite breaks my heart to see you in this state; don't think me too daring, too presuming, but let me help you."

"Help me?"

"Yes;" and putting the one hundred pounds, which was Morley's gift, into her hand, he said—

"This will meet those two bills, and any other small ones, at any rate; it is not of the slightest use to me. Laura, you can go down at once to those people and get rid of them."

"But, my dear boy," said Mrs. Hall, "this is quite impossible; I cannot rob you, I cannot, indeed: no, no, I shall never forget your kind, loving, generous conduct; but how could I take this from you when you may so soon want it for yourself? Little bills may come in just as you leave the army, which you have no idea of at present: then it is so unnatural that you should help me instead of my supplying you with what you are sure to need; for your dear father will not be able to help you. No, no; I can never take the fruits of your own exemplary self-denial and devote them to common bills; so, dear, dear Hal, I

must say no. The blessing of such a son as you are will support me under this and many worse trials."

"Indeed, my dearest mother, this money is utterly useless to me ; believe me when I say so ; I do assure you that it will never do me an atom of good ; and if such a paltry sum as this can relieve you of a single care, or the shadow of a care, don't you see how great a pleasure, what an inexpressible comfort you are bestowing on me ? If you don't use it, there it may lie for ever. I never shall ; it can do me no good ; I implore you, my dearest mother, grant me this boon !"

There was no reply. The mother *could* not speak. Harry gave an expressive look to Laura, who, following the direction of his eyes, left the room with the bills which had produced this scene, and Harry was relieved, if the deep-drawn sigh which escaped him was a proof of his being so.

## CHAPTER X.

“ He jests at scars, that never felt a wound.”

SHAKESPEARE.

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THE next morning, whilst Harry was awaiting a summons to Augustus's room and walking with quick uncertain steps up and down the library, Laura came to say—

“Mamma has asked for you several times, and I think I have looked into every other room in the house ; I am glad I have found you at last ; will you come at once ?”

“I was waiting to see Augustus : he told me to be here after breakfast ; we have some business matters to discuss together ; I expect him every moment.”

“I saw him go out about ten minutes ago, and I think it was Mr. Smith who joined him, just outside of the house ; I don't imagine he will return again just yet, they always have so much to say to each other.”

Harry went with his sister, and after the first salutations were over Mrs. Hall said—“My dearest Hal, I have thought of nothing else, since yesterday, but your kindness and generosity ; you cannot imagine

how it affects me, and how I wonder, more and more, at your having been able, with all your innumerable expenses, all the temptations to extravagance which must have continually beset you, to practise such wonderful self-control as you must have done. Oh, you cannot think what a blessing it is to me to see how entirely worthy you are of all the love I can pour out of my full heart, and also of my fullest confidence!"

Her voice rather faltered, but she tried to conceal her emotion, and did not even trust herself to look at Harry, whilst he, poor fellow, with his heart bursting, with every pulse beating, and the sense of oppression on his conscience, which every word she uttered increased to an unendurable height, made one or two ineffectual attempts to speak, and then, fairly overcome, rushed out of the room.

"Dear, noble fellow! he is so sensitive and high minded; what a heart he has!" said Mrs. Hall.

In another room, the being so eulogised was pacing rapidly to and fro, looking the picture of wretchedness, and every now and then ejaculating sentences against himself! "There is nothing too bad for me: what a consummate hypocrite I am! and yet I would give the world to be able to speak the truth; what a wretched coward I am!—Good heavens, has it come to this? Sneak that I am!"

Augustus and Mr. Smith passed the window, and the former on seeing Harry made a signal to him to open the door, his own hands being full of papers.

He accosted his brother with—"I say, Hal, old fellow, I think I can really help you; Smith has chalked out a plan which looks feasible."

"Thank God!"

"Don't be so ecstatic till we see what can be done: we must not be premature; your gratitude must be kept in the background for the present. Smith," turning to his companion, "will you run over that paper again?"

The injunction was obeyed, and a plan for raising money by selling one portion of land, increasing the rent of another, cutting down a little timber, and also making use of some funded property, in addition to one or two other little arrangements, was laid before the brothers.

"I think that will do something for us, Hal."

"But, Guss, are you sure? It seems too much, so much *too much*."

"Not at all."

"You don't know what I feel, for I can't the least describe my thankfulness, or—or my deep sense of your kindness."

"Time enough for all that sort of thing; at any rate, wait till you know what my 'great kindness'

comes to ; I fear you will be disappointed, for, after all, even if everything sells at the best price and we find no difficulty about the rents, we can't clear more than seven or eight hundred pounds, and I think your figures stand at two thousand, don't they ?”

“ At least.”

“ Well, you see this is all *I* can hope to do just yet : we must make it go as far as we can. Suppose you make out a list of your liabilities and give it to Smith ; some are, no doubt, more pressing than others ; we must settle the most important first, and leave the others for better times.”

“ Better times !”

“ Yes, of course ; they will come sooner or later : set to work with your list, and bring it to me presently. I am going to my den now.”

It was a difficult task, for Harry could not know till he collected them what an *avalanche* of bills was likely to fall on him, so, after several attempts, he gave it up in despair, and went to Augustus to say that he “ found it impossible to enumerate them till he got to the barracks again, but that he believed he was to start in three or four days. My father says,” added he, “ the sooner the better, and my papers are gone in.”

“ In the mean time get up your spirits, it won't do to let the Madré see you look disconsolate, and there

is Laura on the watch too ; she said to me only this morning—‘What can be the matter with Harry ? there must be something on his mind.’ I put her off as well as I could, but she insisted upon it that it was something more than regret at leaving the army.”

Horace called them at that moment to look at his dogs, and asked them to come to the stables.

Harry declined ; he had “a letter to write.”

“I ought to unpack this box of books,” said the other ; “they are the French ones. Laura and my mother might like to see them : can you wait whilst I take them out ?”

That work was soon accomplished, a selection for the morning-room and its occupants was quickly made, and then Augustus, tossing one to Harry, said, “Here is one of Octave Feuillant’s—‘Le Roman d’un jeune Homme pauvre.’ You will like that.”

“It is full of home truths, I suppose ; its *title*, at least, is interesting to me. Does the poor youth get well out of his difficulties ?”

“Yes, splendidly.”

Two or three days after this conversation Ethel and Bertha announced in due form that “a most glorious Christmas-tree would be lighted at six o’clock in the evening, and that an assemblage of ‘rank and talent’ was expected at Darlton Hall to do honour

to its luxuriant blossoms ; and if only Guss, Horace, and Harry would help them to give the finishing touches, it was sure to be the most perfect that ever had been seen," &c. &c.

"Guss" was just the man for that sort of thing : how wonderful his arrangements were ! The coloured lamps would be twice as effective now—and then his own contribution of bon bons fresh from Paris, which had not met the public eye till that particular moment, "how very, very pretty they were!"

A message to the best toyshop at Ferney for a reinforcement of the most fascinating dolls and richly-caparisoned horses, with a few other quadrupeds, increased the tumult of delight, and the laudatory acclamations of Guss's goodness, &c., rose so high, that Laura's deprecating finger was again raised, with a "hush ! remember poor mamma's head."

Mr. and Mrs. Hall looked on benignly, and once or twice exchanged remarks with each other about "the great pleasure of seeing the innocent creatures so happy." "It is, too, so delightful to see such a picture of family union : the circle will soon be broken, but we know how prone the elements of it will be to join again," added Mr. Hall.

The carriages and their contents were punctual to a moment—the neighbourhood, for at least ten or twelve miles, had been invited ; and truly the beauty

of our children of England is marvellously great—so any one would have acknowledged *that* evening.

“Guss” made himself “charming.” The festivities were varied by a charade and a *tableau vivant*, and the little creatures, especially Ethel, Bertha, Ned, and Billy, who had been *en train* for a day or two, and two little Miss Seymours, with some others, performed their respective parts beautifully.

As the evening wore on the amusements were of a still more animated description, and whilst the younger ones filed off to what Ethel styled “the banquet,” the seniors devoted themselves to the shrines of Euphrosyne and Terpsichore — so that “Guss,” Horace, and Harry had their hands quite full. The latter was asked by Laura “to do a very good-natured thing and look in the *greenroom*,” where the actors and actresses had produced no small confusion, “for a ring which Miss Gore fancied she had lost there.” In the course of his researches he found himself at the window, and, on looking out, he observed by the clear moonlight a man who seemed to be looking about with a very scrutinizing air. Something in his aspect fixed his attention, and then seemed to excite his alarm, for he called the old butler, who had just entered the room, and in a trembling, earnest voice said—

“Grey, come here and tell me who that man is.

He is on the carriage-drive now: how comes he here?"

"Sir, that's what's his name: he is on duty here. He was asking after you, Sir, this minute in the hall."

"After me! what did he ask?"

"Well, it was how long you might be a going to stay on here, and if you had brought your horses here, and them sort of questions."

Harry gave a sort of stifled groan, but could ask no more, for Laura put her head in for one instant:

"Oh! Harry, Lady Mary is going to sing, and she wants you for a tenor and Horace for a bass."

He was obliged to obey the mandate, and to join afterwards in a chorus where the refrain was—

" Laugh while ye may,  
And still be gay,  
*Ye may be sad to-morrow.*"

Likely enough to be my fate, if that fellow is what I suspect, a bailiff! thought poor Hal.

Every time the door opened he looked up nervously. He was in the act of bowing his partner to a seat after a waltz, when Grey tapped him on the arm. How the poor fellow started!—

"If you please, Sir, you are wanted; there are two gentlemen wishing to speak a word with you."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Hal. Then turning

to Grey, he said, "Say nothing before my mother; don't alarm her."

The major domo looked bewildered, but walked on, evidently bent on conducting his young master to "the gentlemen."

Harry looked dreadfully pale; but he tried to meet his fate calmly, and left the room—

"Paget! Stuart! Good gracious! I am so glad to see you: where have you come from? Dropped from the clouds, eh?"

"We are here by a most lucky chance," said Paget: "we had promised Talbot that about this time we should 'look him up;' but had fixed no day. On arriving there this evening we found 'the whole family were at Darlton—that there were all sorts of festivities going on,'—so forthwith we decided on joining them, trusting to you for a welcome; and here we are, you see."

With the most evident pleasure Harry introduced his brother officers to his father and mother, and then to Laura, who was soon after led off to dance by Paget, who seemed inclined to make the most of his time and opportunities, and whom every one pronounced to be a most agreeable addition to the party. Stuart did not come out in so prominent a manner; but still he shared the popularity of his companion.

At supper Harry's spirits rose to a wonderful

pitch : the reaction from former misery and alarm was naturally excessive, and then it was that both his loving parents again exchanged their ideas about him :—

“How happy dear Hal is with his friends ! it is quite delightful to see him. Just look at him now. I assure you that not an hour ago I was most uneasy about him, he looked so low and pale,”—remarked Mrs. Hall.

“Yes,” replied Mr. H., “I am afraid the cause of his late depression, which was quite evident to us all, is one springing from our late misfortunes, as it is the state of affairs which makes his leaving the army imperative. His heart is with his regiment : it is easy to see that it is in his profession, if ever a young man’s was, and so it distresses me more than I can say that I am forced to take him out of it and to place him in so altered and uncongenial a sphere. It can’t be helped ; still it is a sad trial to me.”

“Dearest Percy, I can see all you feel ; but it is better not to think about it. It is no fault of yours—*that* is a great comfort ; and our children are all sure to do well—so good, so steady, so excellent, so self-denying. We have much to be thankful for, much to rejoice in. Do you know sometimes I forget all about our money matters and that kind of distress, blessings seem to preponderate so.”

“My poor dear Georgie!”

Augustus, Horace, and Laura sat in conclave.

“How glad I am that those friends of Harry’s came to-night!” said the latter, “and Captain Paget is such a nice person—he seems so fond of Hal. I did not see so much of Mr. Stuart; but if they are all as agreeable and good, I don’t wonder at his being so very sorry to leave the —th. What a pity it is he can’t stay in! I *am* so sorry.”

Horace declared that he could not quite make him out: “If ever I saw a poor fellow look as if he was being led off to execution, it was Hal when old Grey took him into the hall to welcome them to-night.”

Augustus added, “He is one of the fellows who can’t rouse themselves if anything disturbs them—he wants energy.”

Harry said to himself that night, “What a stew I was in when I was called out to meet Paget and Stuart! I declare I expected to be *arrested* on the spot!—*that* would have been a ‘pretty go!’—and actually in my blind alarm I took old Evans for a bailiff, and felt as if I were in his very clutches. Guss and Horace may laugh; but ‘what is sport to them is death to me,’ as old Esop has it.”

## CHAPTER XI.

“Wouldst not play false, and yet would wrongly win.”

SHAKESPEARE.

“I turned aside to weep ; I lost him a little while.”

TUPPER.

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SOME days passed smoothly enough : the only variety in the routine of every day life was that Captain Paget found his way every morning to Darlton Hall, that every one there declared he was very agreeable, and that neither Laura nor her mother expressed the slightest surprise at his daily visits.

The departure of Harry was drawing very near ; but then his absence from home was to be only temporary. Mr. Hall expected that his return would follow immediately on his retirement from the army, and that “the winding up of his affairs would not occupy much time.”

Paget had dined with them as usual, and had said all his “*last words*,” when Harry was summoned to his father’s room—so, hastily adding his adieus to those of the others, he obeyed the order.

“You start early to-morrow, my dear boy, so I thought I would give you my last directions to-night.

When that matter about selling your commission is settled, the money will, I presume, be paid into Cox's. You can let me know, or they can ; for I should wish it to be made over at once to my own banker. Your chargers you will dispose of ; but stay—perhaps it would be as well to keep them, unless you get a good price, for they may be useful to you when you settle down here to your duties as agent, and there will be no end of stalls at their command. Excepting the carriage-horses for your dear mother, and a pony for the girls, all ours will go : the hunters are already gone, as you know. I wish—I very much wish, my dear Hal, that—that I could have kept you on in the sphere of life which is so congenial to you ; but—but”—and here he cleared his voice—“ we cannot choose for ourselves. I feel very much for you, for I see it is a great trial to you : it is one to myself—it can't be otherwise. I have always desired to promote the views and wishes of my children, and you may be very sure, my dear fellow, that yours should have been fully entered into and supported, if I had continued to possess the means for so doing ; and you have this consolation under your disappointments, early as they have begun in life, that you *deserve* happiness, whether it is granted in the exact way and measure we could wish or not. . You are a noble, self-denying, excellent fellow—God bless you !” and

then rising, he added, "I won't keep you another instant; go to your mother and say good bye, to-night, for she must not be disturbed in the morning. We shall hear from you in a day or two, I conclude."

And thus the congé was given.

The agitation which was felt by the recipient of all this kindness was repressed—it was utterly impossible to utter a word; and so again his natural feelings were stifled only to burst out with redoubled force when he was left alone.

Once he thought of making Laura his confidante; but then the conviction that his revelations would only cloud her happiness and do no good made him hesitate, till the opportunity passed away, and he had only a minute left in which he had to take leave of his mother before she went to her room, and to say a word to Laura about "soon coming back again," &c.

One or two of his own especial associates reached the barracks at B—— about the same time that he entered the quadrangle, and greetings loud and hearty were exchanged. In the course of conversation Hal mentioned that he had "left Paget in the neighbourhood of Darlton." Alfred Paget was very popular, and seemed to excite more than a passing interest.

"What is Curly Paget at?"—(He was famous for his "Brutus head")—

"Curling himself round the hearts of my mother and sisters," was the succinct reply.

"Ah! yes, to be sure, trust him for *that*. How many sisters have you? Are they very pretty?—how old are they?"

"I have three; they are all pretty. One is six, I have another at eight, and so on." (He did not choose to add that Laura was nineteen.)

"And Stuart, what is he at?"

"Roaming about, seeking whom he may devour."

"He snapped *you* up pretty quick; he has never repaid you, I suppose?"

"Never."

And pretty much in this strain the young men discussed their comrades in arms, and the private affairs of themselves and others.

Whist was the amusement for the evening. Lorton, in whose room the green-table was laid out, insisted on Harry's making a fourth, although he tried to escape. They did not play high, still he felt a sort of stupefying remorse all the time. One of the things he had determined to do was to renounce cards. He won two or three pounds, and then did not feel quite so disgusted at himself as he certainly would have done if he had lost. His good fortune continued for more than a week; he tried to drown care too at the mess—another step in the wrong

course, but one that he did not shrink from.—“It can’t be for long—an end to all this will come soon enough.”

One day more of field-practice, and then he was to say farewell to all temptation. By the afternoon’s post a letter from “Guss” informed him that “six hundred was all he could help him with; the tenants were restive, and the land did not sell so well as he had expected; he had sold out of the funds too at a bad time.”

Poor Harry!

That night the libations were long and deep. It might have been that his head was not quite clear; but he played ill, the stakes were high, he made two or three bets, lost everything, and left Lorton’s room in an infinitely more wretched state of mind than when he entered it.

Nearly a hundred pounds of debt was added to the overwhelming mass.

He slept heavily, rose only in time to be accoutred in haste, and rode to the scene of action in a confused state of mind, with an aching head and depressed spirits.

He was not mounted on his best charger; *that* might have had something to do with it; but he seemed pre-occupied and careless to the last degree. To spectators the evolutions were wonderful. No

one ever looked on those made by the —th without admiration. Splendid men!—magnificent horses!—martial skill in perfection! How the sun blazed out that morning!—how the military adornments glistened under its rays! But what is this?—a horse is down, a rider is thrown: in vain are the attempts of one or two to make their chargers swerve to the right so as to clear that fallen mass! On they rush! Some even trod on the form which lay motionless beneath their feet!

The fallen horse struggled and impeded others, whilst in the impetuous steeds there was no power to check the impetus. The riders could not break the uniformity of the manœuvres they were going through, could not turn, could not restrain their horses, or alter the course they were so swiftly pursuing, under commands which *cannot* be deviated from. The fallen officer does not move; there, left in the distance, he lies; side by side, stiff and resistless, rests the shabracked charger. There is a rush from that knot of spectators. It is *safe now* to move and proffer aid to the object of attention. One after another crowd round him; his helmet is undone; some efforts are made to raise him, but the form falls backwards, to all appearance lifeless.

The "*halt*" is given in a stentorian voice, and then, rapidly indeed, do many fly to the rescue;

their eager looks, their beating hearts, are all for the fallen.

Not a word is uttered. Some shake their heads, some pale beneath the terror which seizes all.

"He is dead."

"It's all over with him."

"Poor fellow!"

"His horse stumbled, and he fell at once; ten at least went over him: I saw it all."

"Oh, God! Is there no help? Is he quite dead? He must be moved at once."

Disjointed words like these broke forth. A litter was brought, and very gently, tenderly as if their hearts had been women's, and their touch as delicate, the officer was raised.

"Poor Hal!"—for it was even he—was ejaculated in tones of deepest sympathy.

Every now and then there was a stop in the solemn march. "Bear him the shortest way to the barracks,"—was the order issued; but long before that point could be reached the surgeon in attendance, after another pause, said, "Life is not extinct, but we must rest here. I should propose, Colonel, that we took him to the White House: it stands close by; we shall never get him to the barracks."

It was good counsel. The house was tenantless, the rooms on the ground floor were good, and to a

large airy bed-room the sufferer was conveyed. The surgical examinations were fully entered into, and the oracular words were spoken—"It may prove to be a mortal injury, and most likely he will die ; but life is not extinct ; we must hope."

There seemed but little ground for *that*, however ; the case was a fearful one, and the signs of life too feeble to rest on.

"I will not leave this spot till there is a change one way or the other," was the Colonel's resolution. "Major C——, perhaps you will also remain ?" It was a scene of awful stillness, of intense anxiety.

And at Darlton—how had time sped there?—Horace had rejoined his regiment. He was very dear to them all. Who could help loving the frank, open-hearted youth, who made light of sorrow for the sake of others, but who knew how to soothe the distressed by the kindness of his own warm heart ? Still, he did not work upon the feelings of his family as Harry did. Parting with him for an uncertain time would have been worse ; they all felt that. Then Guss was at home ; that was a great comfort ; and, as Laura said, "Captain Paget has become quite one of us, he is *such* an interest to *mamma*."

It was quite true, and it seemed as if a new phase in Laura's life had begun ; he had actually asked her

either to call him "Curly Paget" as Harry did or Arthur; he "should feel more at home if she would." Then there he was every morning—the Talbots, whose nominal guest he was, only wished to see him amused, so never interfered. He had a cousin who lived in the old abbey the other side of Ferney, and on him he meant to quarter himself the remaining days of his leave. His father and mother were at Dresden, where the former filled a diplomatic situation: he never thought of bestowing himself on them; no, the distance put that quite out of the question.

Laura almost wondered at herself: she hardly missed either Horace or Harry. She did not even think now, as she did some weeks ago, about the changes which had taken place in her father's fortunes. She liked nothing so much as sketching with Captain Paget, or getting him to help her with her German translations; and when he rode with her and Guss, she "fancied, that although it was winter, the country looked even more beautiful than it did in summer." Alas! alas! how suddenly the sunshine of her young life was to be obscured!

Mrs. Hall had remarked "that the Christmas roses on her writing-table were faded," and proposed that Laura should replenish the vase, and there seemed to be some very fine chrysanthemums at the turning

to the left from the south terrace ; she added, "Suppose you gather some."

It happened that just as Laura left the house to fulfil this mission, Captain Paget dismounted and joined her ; their united efforts soon produced a beautiful bouquet, which they were both admiring, when they heard the sound of a horse's gallop. The first impulse was to stand still and listen, the second to move on. "It is some visitor to papa ; *we* need not go in," was Laura's comment.

Not many minutes elapsed, when a servant running with unusual speed towards them made them stop.

"Oh, Sir ! oh, Miss ! will you come to my master ? my mistress has fainted. A telegraphic message has just come ; it is something sad, you may be sure."

They flew to the house. Old Grey was trembling in the passage which led to the room where the parents were. In silence he opened the door. Paget said "What is it ?" but no answer came ; Laura could not speak. There lay the fainting mother ; Augustus was supporting her head.

"A message from B—— ; our poor Harry," said Mr. Hall—and then he fairly broke down—"he has been thrown from his horse—is fearfully injured, but faint hopes were entertained ; we are summoned to

him at once; here is the address to the spot where he lies; we must go instantly. Guss, you will stay and support your mother."

These words roused her—"I *must* go with you," and then such a burst of sobbing.

"Impossible! Think for one instant, Georgie, it would kill you. No, no; I will go. Laura shall go, and Herries; she will be of use if a nurse is required. Be calm, my Georgie; try to bear it."

"I can bear it if I go to him, not if I stay away; I should die of suspense, of agony! Oh, Percy! if you love me, let me go."

A servant entered—"The next train starts in half an hour—the carriage will be round in ten minutes."

Paget's offer to accompany them was urged with irresistible force. Augustus could not, would not, be left behind. "The little ones did not want him; Paget would be of the greatest use to them; he was very kind, and as for himself he felt as his mother did, it would be far worse to stay behind. He pressed on his father the wisdom of taking her; it was the only thing to be done; she would feel the effort of going less than the anguish of remaining in suspense behind; that might kill her; he thought she could bear the other."

With what a grateful pressure she thanked him!

Before seven that evening the watchers were at their posts.

The pale stricken mother was told the worst at once.

"Your son is still insensible ; the chief injuries are on the head. We have done all that can be done in such a case. I have never seen a worse ; but whilst there is life there is hope."

How that hope flickered, and then nearly expired ; how the death-like swoon at one time, and then the hollow groan, the restless rolling of the eyes, the utter unconsciousness of all around, the frightful aspect of the mangled limbs, quenched at last its every spark, was never marvelled at by any of that anxious group when they heard the fearful details of the accident.

"That he has lived up to this moment is the wonder—it is miraculous!" was the surgeon's assurance.

That "*the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save,*" was the mother's support, the father's strength, the anchor of hope to that trembling sister and brother.

Days and nights of watchings, that cannot in the intensity of their suffering be described, passed on, and then the first blessed rays of comfort broke through the clouds of darkness.

The Long-Suffering and Merciful God heard the prayers which were offered up in trust and faith.

“He will live, but his recovery must of necessity be tedious.”

“All *that* could be borne; anything, everything! he was preserved to them, the son they so entirely loved, the brother so prized beyond all others.”

How could they be thankful enough? Harry knew them now; how patiently they could wait the issue!

## CHAPTER XII.

“ In the world’s broad field of battle,  
In the bivouac of life,  
Be not like dumb, driven cattle,  
*Be a hero in the strife.*”

*Psalm of Life.*

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RECOVERY was indeed slow—the tedious hours moved heavily onwards: day after day the progress seemed hardly perceptible; still there was hope—blessed hope—and the careworn watchers knew in *Whom they trusted*.

Their nightly vigils were shared with Paget, Lorton, and D’Arcy Dormer—the latter Harry’s dearest friend. Morley, as we have seen, was attached to him by no common bonds; but he could not at that time get leave of absence: and the others took their turns with Augustus and Harry’s servant. The parents and Laura were in close attendance during the day; and it was only when the latter looked so pale that the former were alarmed on her account, that she could be persuaded to change the atmosphere of the sick-room for that on the common. The anxious mother bore up wonderfully. Mr. Hall then

saw how much more trying *inaction* would have been to her, and he, too, waited very patiently. It was not till the medical report increased hope to certainty of recovery that he could turn his attention to the home they had so suddenly left. There was much to arrange there—much which required his immediate return. The subject was gently touched on to the invalid:—

“I see you ought to go; but must you take Laura and Guss?”

“We could not well leave her even under Guss’s care without a chaperon—*that* is the difficulty.”

It was one soon solved. Mr. Hall’s only sister, Mrs. Davenport, “was in town now—a widow without home ties, a gentle, kind creature;—she would come, there was little doubt, and take care of Laura; her matronly wing would spread over the whole circle,” &c.

So she was asked, and unhesitatingly complied.

In the course of a few weeks Harry was pronounced to be well enough to change his quarters.

The doctor expected his patient to be delighted, and was astonished at his indifference when he pompously gave his permission to a movement which, under most circumstances of a similar nature, is received with pleasure.

Laura saw it, too, and she ventured to say—“Home

air will do you so much good, Harry dear, and then to poor papa and mamma it will be such a blessing to have you."

"*A blessing!* Ah! you little know."

She looked as if she thought his *head* was still affected, and determined to ask the surgeon of the —th, in whom every one had the greatest confidence, "if he was quite sure that the injuries to *that* had been quite overcome?"

D'Arcy and Paget, as usual, made their appearance, and then other matters were discussed.

"You should see Ford, the new cornet—such a spooney! We had capital fun with him this morning, however, and a little wholesome rallying will make a man of him in time. He stood pumping like a fish, and we gave him all the water we could draw. We have taken the shine out of all his grandeur; but he made a horrid fuss about his books. Paget illustrated them and I illuminated them with tooth-powder and blacking. *Such effects!*"

"When did he come?" languidly asked Harry.

"The day after you levanted in that wonderfully soldier-like way: he was in such a hurry to join—you should have seen him fussing about."

It was a fortunate circumstance, Hal's friends had said at one time, "that the —th having gone out to exercise that day before the post came in, he did

not know that there existed no further occasion for his exertions in Her Majesty's service. All the business about the commission had been finally arranged, as letters which were opened by Augustus informed him. It would have been an aggravation to the poor fellow to know that he might have escaped it all," &c.

Harry seemed to care very little: he only said he was "glad that his father would have no more trouble about *that* part of the business," and then he sighed so audibly that his companions "conjured him to have more pluck and to bear up—they were sure that he would be as well as ever soon, and able to cross the country with the best of them."

Harry did not even smile.

Aunt Lydia returned from a walk across the heath, accompanied by Laura: the roses on the cheeks of the latter blushed to a deeper tint when she saw that Paget had been beguiling the time of her absence from her charge—*she* always had a smile for him.

Further revelations were made about the unhappy cornet whose case had been under discussion; and Aunt Lydia could not refrain from saying, "It seems to me all very cruel."

Laura added, "And so unmanly; practical jokes always seem so very childish and useless."

"Not useless; excuse me," said Paget.

“What good do they do?”

“Teach a man to bear little miseries with a good grace. I assure you it is quite a necessary part of the discipline of life.”

“Could not *that* be taught in some better way than by destroying a man’s books, breaking up his furniture, and doing every species of mischief?”

“Yes, mischief!” chimed in Aunt Lydia; “and we all know *who* it is that finds *that* for idle hands to do.”

“It gives a man such *experience*—you can’t think how valuable *that* is.”

“What are you saying about ‘experience?’” said Harry, who had hitherto taken no part in the conversation; “what good does experience do? A poor wretch finds he has committed a series of blunders and errors—no, those words are too gentle to apply to his sin and folly; he thinks, after *experience*, as you call it, has opened his eyes, that he is sure to avoid both again; he has plenty of remorse, but no strength to resist, and down he falls again. What misery it all is!”

“Don’t preach, Harry, it is not good for you: go to sleep, like a wise fellow, and we’ll bring Ford to you to-morrow, just to look at; you will see then that he requires a good deal more ducking and smoking. We are going to frighten him out of his senses, and out of his window, too, to-night. He will think the

room is on fire; the jump won't hurt him, and then he will learn not to strut and look glum and consequential."

"Poor Mr. Ford!" said Laura.

That evening two men came to the White House, and in very peremptory terms demanded an interview with Mr. Henry Hall, late of the —th. Of course they were told "that admission to *his* presence was impossible—that he was still too ill to be disturbed." They declared "their business was of the most urgent nature, and that they would not leave the premises till they were attended to." Loud and angry voices shook Laura's nerves, alarmed Mrs. Davenport, and seemed to frighten the invalid to such a degree that Aunt Lydia proposed seeing the men herself.

"You must not, indeed; Guss will be at home presently; he will soon settle them."

But *that* was not so easily done; the men insisted on immediate payment of some debts which could not be allowed to stand over another day, threatened an arrest, and were very abusive. Laura could not understand it. How she wished Captain Paget had not left them! "It must be some mistake; Harry owed no one anything, *she* knew *that* well enough. Oh! if Guss would only come!—There was Harry working himself up into a fever!"

Guss did come, expostulated in vain with the intruders, assured them that their claims should be attended to, but that they must wait.

He was told that they could not and would not do so, that other demands, not so pressing as theirs, had been met, and that *now* was their time, and no other.

It was true that six hundred pounds had been disbursed by the elder brother for the younger within the last three weeks, but the fund raised as we have seen was all that could be produced at that time. These men required nearly a hundred more—sixty pounds on one account—a saddler's bill; and thirty-eight pounds on the other, from his bootmaker. Little enough, and a sum that at any other time Augustus could have produced without the slightest embarrassment; but besides the six hundred pounds, he had been paying away almost all the ready money he possessed for smaller bills at B——. Lorton had mentioned one day “that a number of letters and huge packets, which looked like bills, had been brought to him out of Harry's room at the barracks when Ford took possession; and that as it would be the height of extravagance to attend to the latter, which of course accumulated during the ‘snipe’ season, they had held a court-martial on the suspicious and offending missives, which had been sentenced to death, and their ashes to oblivion in a slow

fire." This made the elder brother on the alert about preventing such papers from being produced before his father or before Harry, but very careful to collect them at once; and so by this time he was becoming pretty well acquainted with the real state of the ex-cornet's affairs.

On the present occasion he could really do nothing but give a promissory note, and with that, after more noise, and much that it was shocking to hear, they departed.

Laura had been so bewildered, and Mrs. Davenport so terrified, that, as the former said afterwards, "They had quite lost their presence of mind, they were so afraid it would make poor Hal worse."

And so it did; he was fearfully ill for some days. Fever seized him again, and in his delirium he almost shrieked in horror at every one who came near him, and then he entreated them to be patient, and he would pay them all. Sometimes he raved about his mother, and talked as if he had killed her; and at others he declared that he knew that his father hated him, and that they all despised him, and saw now what a consummate hypocrite he was. It was heartrending to see and hear him. Augustus and Laura were dreadfully alarmed, and determined, if there was no decided change for the better, to sum-

mon their father back again. The watchings now were, indeed, full of misery and anxiety. Laura could not bear to leave him, and they were afraid to let any of his companions share their toil ;—" he says such things ! " she added.

That night Augustus told her all he knew of his poor brother's troubles. At first she was greatly shocked and affected ; but she would not blame Hal for *not* telling everything at once ; " It would have almost killed mamma ; and then papa was wretched enough about his own affairs ; " she only wished he had told *her*. She did not see that he had so much to accuse himself of in not having insisted on rejecting the praise they were always bestowing on him, poor fellow. They took it for granted that *he* was all right, and they never gave him an opportunity of telling them the truth ; it was no fault of Hal's.

No ; so Augustus had told him over and over again, and he had always dissuaded him from revealing his affairs at that time ; the concealment was quite as much his doing as Hal's, &c.

They talked, and she wept and mourned over the blight which had fallen on the youth and prospects of that darling brother. She could not bear to see how his own irresolution and folly had produced all the

evil he suffered from ; and, as she said, "It is of no use thinking of *that* ; we must turn our minds to the means of extricating him. If we could only save papa and mamma !"

But *that* was impossible. The doctors shook their heads, and said, "Had you not better send for his father ? We fear the struggle cannot last long."

Mr. Hall was telegraphed for and came immediately. The poor trembling mother was so overcome by the alarm the message excited, that she yielded to her husband's entreaties and remained at home. She made one condition, one petition almost inarticulate in her grief,—“If he becomes worse ; if—if—(she could not utter her dread)—and if he misses me, send for me instantly.”

There was hardly a shadow of hope ; fever, fed by a tortured mind, fell ruthlessly on a frame so weakened by suffering, and for many nights and days suspense and dread predominated. There were what seemed flashings of reason, and then the agonized parent heard what he could not forget, and could not for some time understand.

Augustus was right when he said to Laura, "Whether the dear fellow gets well or not, *this* is the time to tell my father. All his heart is so softened towards poor Hal, and all his sense of suffering seems so concentrated in the one idea of his illness, and the

terror that he may lose him, that I really don't think he will care about his debts."

And it was even so. The father listened with a blanched face and with a trembling eagerness to know everything. "Conceal nothing from me ; I can bear anything and everything, if only the Almighty in His infinite mercy spares my boy. What is the loss of wealth to me ? What is it to any of us ? I had no right to expect that he, poor fellow, could be stronger in purpose than his fellows, or more prudent. His is a case common to us all ; he was tempted—he fell ! Are we not all liable to err ? Thank God ! there was no premeditated vice ! We cannot be grateful enough for that ; I know that is what your dear mother will feel."

The struggle was long and fearful, but life was spared ; and in time and by slow degrees the health of the sufferer was restored.

The first thing which really gave vital energy to powers which had had so much mentally and bodily to exhaust them, was a short sentence from his father.

"Don't be uneasy on account of your debts, my dear boy : I know all about them. You shall be quite clear in a short time. Try to get strong, and then we shall go back to your dear mother and to Darlton again ; only wiser and better than when we left them."

How beautiful and how inexpressibly touching is the analogy between the Long-Suffering, Ever-enduring Loving-Kindness of our Heavenly Father, and the untiring affection of the tender earthly parent!

The tears that son shed were like dew from heaven, refreshing the parched heart; the gratitude he felt bound his very soul with adamant power to the Fountain of Mercy, from which his deliverance from trouble had flowed.

“Oh, God! I thank Thee!”—was the first outpouring of the grateful heart, and then the earnest beseechings, with many tears, offered up by the contrite spirit for grace to lead a new life—were they not heard and answered? Truly that young soldier, after the discipline he had endured, went out to the battle of life under another banner with very different principles; and, casting aside all self-reliance, he met the perils and temptations of his future warfare with unflinching courage.

## CHAPTER XIII.

"Dreams that the soul of youth engage."

"Was ever such a son?"

Turn over all the stories of the world,  
And search thro' all the memories of mankind,  
And find me such a friend."

B. AND F.

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SPRING was bursting forth in all its beauty, heralding in the brighter summer of life, when the absentees returned to Darlton. They all felt that it had never looked so beautiful; and, expanding as their hearts were with the deep sense of past mercies, their very powers of vision seemed clearer, and at every turn some new delight was discovered and expressed.

"It will do you so much good, dear papa, to come out on the terrace and to see our two most delicate plants reviving under the influence of sun and air. Mamma seems so well to-day, and Harry, dear fellow, is looking a great deal better."

"You are a very tempting little syren; but I am afraid I must not indulge myself to-day. Several people are waiting to see me, and I want to talk to Augustus. Do you know where he is?"

Guss was traced to his favourite haunt, on the verge

of the trout-stream, and then summoned to a consultation :—

“I wanted to talk to you. What shall I do about this place? I find that it will be quite impossible to continue here. A reduction of one’s income from six thousand a year to fifteen hundred is a startling fact, and must be dealt with at once. I fear I must let Darlton.”

“*Let it, Sir?*”

“Yes, I fear it must come to that. It is very easy to talk of reducing one’s establishment and beginning things in a different way; but in this large house, and with our present tastes engendered and strengthened by so many years of indulgence, how impossible it seems!—we must change the scene of action.”

“Where could you go? Your Cornwall place is let, is it not? And, besides, that would be too small.”

“Large enough for us now, perhaps; but it is not at my command—the lease which Trevannon holds is not out for the next four years. There is a sort of floating idea in my head about going abroad.”

“Ah! that would not be so bad: change of climate might do my mother good.”

“There might be a blessing in store for us there, too, and there probably would be advantages to the younger children; Laura would like it also. But the trial to your dear mother and to us all would be the

parting from Harry : he must remain on this property as my agent."

"I see."

"And you understand that under present circumstances I could not liberate him from that engagement : I do not think he would, feeling as he does now, allow me to do so."

"He seems very anxious to fit himself for the duties of the position : I see he reads a great deal, and talks ad libitum to Wilmot upon the matters he will have to attend to."

"Dear fellow !"

"I have an idea that the south of France would suit my mother : the air is so soft, the winters are so mild ; but I have no experience in the matter. I have only passed through Cannes, which is the most favourite resort of the English, and Paget, who has been there with his family, says it is very relaxing. I like Dresden better than all other foreign places, and, by-the-way, Paget can tell you more about it than even I can : his father, you know, married the Queen of Saxony's 'première dame d'honneur,' and they live there and delight in the place. The climate is charming, too, clear and invigorating : then, if you care for *haute société*, you have it to perfection. The environs would be the pleasantest part to live in : and yet I should like to be near the majestic Elbe,

or where one could have continually before one's eyes the view of the bridge and the heights covered with vines on the other side of the river; and there are such palaces and gardens! such libraries and picture galleries! sculpture which would enchant you! and altogether the sphere would suit you. You know, Dresden is the Florence of the north."

"It all sounds as if it might do," was Mr. Hall's calm reply to his son's enthusiastic and animated enumerations. The worst part of the whole thing is, that your mother is so wedded to this place: it has been a happy home to us both for many years. I have hardly nerve to break the matter to her; and yet I see no other escape from the difficulties which surround us."

It was very touching to see with what a chastened meek spirit Harry took all the instructions now given to him—how patiently he received the advice which Mr. Wilmot, who was much given to repetition, administered, and how cheerfully he entered upon the new path of life before him.

There were few outward signs of inward emotion; but we may be sure he felt a great deal.

Nothing but a total abnegation of self could carry him through the duties and occupations which were at such utter variance with all his former tastes.

Mrs. Hall bore the announcement of the projected

plan just as one might expect an unselfish, noble-hearted woman to do.

"If you think it best, dear Percy, I am sure we shall all like it. You say that perhaps in three years we might return; and it will be a great thing for the children to get good masters—they are all at the right ages for such a step in their education. It is only the trial to you that I dread, and—and the separation from my dear, dear Hal: I cannot help loving him more than ever, given back to me as he has been."

Laura was startled into a burst of tears when she was told of the contemplated emigration.

Captain Paget had written constantly to Harry since their return home, and he had mentioned his determination to "afflict his kinsman near Ferney with a visitation as soon as he could get leave of absence for a week or two."

So, naturally enough, Laura's imagination had led her to roam into the woods (in anticipation), to ride all over the prettiest parts of the country, to arrange the most charming expeditions to the three far-famed ruins in the neighbourhood, and to perpetuate the remembrance of all the pleasure she was sure to have by sketching on the tinted sheets which had been prepared for her under Captain Paget's directions; and in all this imagery the said hero was at her side

—so charming, so courteous, so kind to her, always making *her* his first object, and showing her in a thousand ways how *very, very* much he liked her, and now—oh! it was too shocking!—not one of these things could happen.

It was impossible to help it—she went into her own room, then locked the door, and indulged in a good cry!

The next morning the sun shone out so brightly that to a certain degree her gloom was dispelled; but still she could not bear the demonstrations of satisfaction which emanated from the little ones, and Mademoiselle's broad honest grin exasperated her.

"What is there to be so enchanted about? Is there anything so charming in being banished from our home?"

"Banished?" said Ethel; "I did not know it was that: I thought only naughty people were 'banished'; and I am sure papa and mamma, and Guss, and Harry, and you, too, and Mademoiselle, and Bertha, are all good—quite good!"

"Well, it comes to the same thing: we are all to go away from dear, darling Darlton, and to go abroad. *I* don't think it will suit papa, or poor mamma either."

Children naturally delight in change—it is the excitement most congenial to them: something to

do, something to wonder about, something to rouse up their energies and their capabilities. If they don't learn to be useful, they, at least, find out how to be quiet and how "to keep out of the way." There is, too, such a spirit of enterprise about the little creatures: they mean to do so many things, to see so much, and to collect such an infinity of curiosities. Ned and Billy were at home for their Easter holidays, and to their joy there were no bounds.

"Mamma says we shall be at a school close to them, wherever they are; we are to leave B——. I am so glad."

This was Ned's comment.

Billy's was equally to the purpose—"Now we shall skate and hunt; people hunt wolves and boars abroad!"

It was not till they heard that Harry was to remain behind that Laura met with any sympathy.

And then "Why can't he come with us?" was reiterated in every tone of voice, from the inquiring key down to the pathetic—"It will be nothing without him."

It was explained that he was to stay at home to do things for papa—that Mr. Wilmot was going away, and that Harry was to take his place.

"And live here all by himself in this great big house?"

"No; other people would come to live in this house—people they had never seen, or perhaps heard of."

"Who is coming?"

"It is not yet known who will come; that does not much signify. We are to go; that's all I know."

As to Harry, who was to be left desolate and alone, excepting that he looked very pale and that his lips quivered when he attempted to smile at some allusions that were made to the time when he would be "alone in all his glory," there was no possibility of detecting his feelings; he never spoke of them, but seemed absorbed by his new duties: these were likely to be arduous enough. All the property, excepting that which extended for about two miles close to the house, was to be under his care; the tenant was to have the right of shooting and fishing over the estate, and that comprised miles of wood and heather; the farms and the two mills, &c. &c. were to be his charge, and he was to live in the lodge at the south end of the property, just where Mr. Wilmot had been domiciled for years. It was well situated: the immediate scenery was picturesque, and the four-roomed house, with its kitchen and outhouse, made a very comfortable residence. So far all was arranged; and as soon as it was known that Percy Hall meant to let Darlton,

applications for its possession poured in upon the proprietor.

"I think my old friend Digby will be a good and careful tenant : I have accepted his terms, or rather, he meets mine. We were much together at one period of our lives, just before he joined the army : he is General Digby now," was Mr. Hall's announcement one day.

"Has he any family?"

"Two daughters and one son, I understand ; Mrs. Digby died some time ago."

Everything was soon settled : the Halls were to evacuate on the 10th ; on the 15th the Digbys were to take possession. Guss determined to accompany his parents, Paget declared over and over again that Dresden was the very place for them, and Laura smiled when she heard that he had added, "Nothing on earth shall prevent me from visiting my family there this autumn, if I am alive."

Guss won his father's consent to the great desire of his heart, and he did so by an innocent *ruse*, in the way children do sometimes—

"Promise me first, and then I will tell you."

And the vow was on record before all the witnesses : there could be no escape.

The Ferney property was nearly two thousand a year, and excepting a hundred or so for his per-

sonal expenses, all he had was to be thrown into the common fund; the old manor-house was to be let; they were to live together at Dresden; he would see them settled there, and then come back to look after Hal.

Remonstrances against this plan and deeply-fixed purpose were all in vain.

Could anything more delightful for him be devised? No, nothing. There he should be in the element he delighted in, always with the beings he loved most on earth; and if there was a pure joy in this world, it would be that. "I do believe I shall be of use and a comfort to you."

"A comfort!"

Their hearts were too full; tears filled their eyes, and, blended together, the trembling voices breathed—

"God bless thee, my son!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

"Then in life's goblet freely press  
The leaves that give it bitterness;  
Nor prize the coloured waters less,  
For in thy darkness and distress  
New light and life they give!"

LONGFELLOW.

THOSE who set off on their travels are not, generally speaking, so much entitled to our sympathy as those left behind. New scenes, new hopes, fresh prospects, and expectations, which, to the young, are tinted in brightest hues, buoy up the spirits, and leave no vacuity behind. But to the deserted ones how different it is! The monotony of life has been disturbed and agitated, and for a season the very prospect of separation was accompanied by a degree of excitement; there was something to do for the departing ones; last wishes to receive, promises to give: but now it is all over.

The two carriages have driven off; the most precious ones filled the first—the parents, the sisters: then followed the eager young schoolboys, under the care of old Grey, Herries, and a travelling servant. Grey was to see them off from Dover, and then to

return to guard his young master, who was to take up his quarters at the South Lodge at once. Mrs. Hall had also entrusted him to the most steady and ancient of the women-servants; so with his own groom, and the promised aid of the gardener from the great house, Hal had what Guss called "a very good *ménage*:" and everything had been arranged for him by his mother and Laura, so that the furniture of his house was replete with comfort.

"There is nothing else we can do for him, dear, dear fellow;" was the mother's last judgment pronounced on the completion of the work. "You can alter the light of that picture perhaps; I think it would be better here; and then place the writing-table nearer the window, and the sofa farther back. Yes, that is better; I can see nothing else wanting:" and then such a sigh.

Laura wished she might have two minutes more, "just to fill another vase with flowers;" and she put the newspapers, and one or two new books, and a paper-cutter, on a table close to the arm-chair; then she stepped back and took in the whole view. "It looks charming, does it not, mamma? He will be quite comfortable here, and Grey and nurse will both take such care of him. We had better go now; you will be tired."

The eyes of both were filled with tears; but they

heard Harry's voice in the garden, and *he* must not see their distress.

This was the last visit, and these were the finishing touches to his new home.

Of course all these marks of love and thoughtfulness were very precious to him, but it was not of *them* he was thinking when he joined them, it was how he could best conceal the pangs which were struggling for mastery in his breast, how he could keep up the show of contentment and cheerfulness for their sakes, how he tried all that last evening, and how calm, and yet how pale, he was the next morning.

They were gone!—

The reaction after suppressed emotion was a relief to him, and it did him more good than he could express to indulge in one burst of sorrow when every one was out of the way, and he felt he might do as he liked. He was to write constantly, to hear regularly; they would all keep journals for his amusement. “And you will be sure to look after my rabbits?” “And my puppy?” “And to remind the keeper about the stag’s horns?”—were all last injunctions from Ethel, Ned, and Bertha, which he promised to hold sacred.

“Take care of yourself. If you feel the least ill at any time, send for Mr. Scott;”—and other direc-

tions were mingled with the blessings poured out on him. He remembered every word. Laura's last—"Write constantly, dearest;" and his father's—"Don't for our sakes overwork yourself, my boy; remember what you are to us;"—and his mother's—"My precious Hal!"—and then Guss's brotherly gripe.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! This will never do, I must to work at once—nothing else for me now; and, with God's help, they shall know no more care on my account; I have something to live for, something to strive for, and, God knows, much to atone for."

The travellers were all bent on exertion: the mother for her husband's sake, and for Laura's and Augustus's, the others claimed nothing from her but permission to talk and laugh as much as they pleased.

On the first and second evenings—for it took them two days to reach Dover—they were so cautious about not over-fatiguing Mrs. Hall. She and Laura, after bearing up during the day, gave way to the natural impulse of each, and talked of their dear absent one till tears dimmed their eyes.

The first day Laura began—"Can't you see him now, dearest mamma? This is just about the time that he will be taking possession of the Lodge. The moment he gets up stairs he will walk straight up to

your picture and papa's; they will rivet him to the spot for some time; then he will turn to that sketch of himself and of me when he was twelve and I was ten—he declares it is so like me still—and 'after that he will take up the books we placed on the table, and he will look at the flowers and smell them; nurse will ask him when he 'will please to have dinner.' He won't care very much when he has it, but when it is announced he will go to his tidy little dining-room, and he will try to talk to nurse about *her* interests, not his own; and then—and then—I am afraid he will feel very melancholy—all alone; he never has been so before."

The next evening the strains were very much the same. On the fourth the conversation in the railway carriage was more animated. They were going from Calais to Paris; and although Harry was still uppermost in their minds, thoughts of him were blended with other ideas.

"I wonder if the Miss Digbys are nice girls?" was Laura's first allusion to them, "and what their names are? Papa, did you ever hear them?"

"I think Digby mentions them in his last letter: I will look. Yes, here they are: the General says, 'My daughters Madeline and Rosa will have great pleasure in fulfilling any bequests of the Miss Halls; so if they have any pets to commit to their care, or

any poor people who require especial looking after, they beg they may be entrusted with them.' That is very kind of them," said Mr. Hall.

"Yes, very," replied Laura.

"I dare say they are very good sort of girls," from Augustus.

"I have no doubt they are: Digby is a sensible fellow. I should think they had been well brought up," added Mr. Hall.

"Most likely they will both fall in love with Harry."

"Well, two at a time might prove troublesome: suppose you reserve one for me, Laura."

"Oh! I never thought of you, Guss. Which will you have?"

"Madeline sounds grandest—most in *my* style. She is sure to be handsome, very accomplished, and able to hunt. I rather fancy a Diana would suit me."

"Rosa sounds more like Harry—she ought to be exquisitely pretty with such a name. Well, she shall have Harry, and Madeline shall have you."

"Thank you a thousand times: then that's settled."

"What is settled?" said Mr. Hall, who had not been attending.

"Oh! only about Guss's wife and Harry's."

Mr. Hall smiled. "It was only the other day that

Guss declared in the most solemn way that the woman was not born yet who could enthrall him."

"I don't believe she is; but in the mean time Laura means me to marry the eldest Miss Digby."

Then Paris was discussed, and Guss assured them that they were "sure to be enchanted with it"

And so they were.

The air so pure, the scene so exhilarating, the variety so intensely amusing—the children were in ecstasies. Laura and her mother "sighed for Harry." Guss and his father "wished that he could have been with them." Ned and Ethel set off shopping directly, and thought the "Palais Royal was fairy land." Bertha and Billy had entrapped Guss, and he took them to a "*passage*," where everything under the sun was to be found—such treasure—such wonderful things. Ethel had bought a pencil case for Harry, "just like a little gun;" Ned "a knife, the shape of a sword;" and Bertha had "a drum for him, full of bonbons," &c.

Mamma "wondered how all these warlike instruments were to reach Harry."

"By Guss, when he goes to see him."

On the fifth day after the departure from Darlton, old Grey returned. He had loving letters to deliver at the lodge—for the elder ones had written by him: Laura's was quite a volume. "How she had found

so much to say already," rather puzzled the bearer of the packet; but the recipient of it only said, "Just like her—how she remembers everything!"

"If you please, Sir, the new people are come; they arrived a little before seven this evening."

Harry knew very well that they were expected to do so. He had gone through all the rooms that very afternoon, had ordered fires in all—for even in May the evenings are chilly; he had himself moved a basket of hothouse plants out of a side-window into the centre one, and had pulled some of the easy chairs forward so as to give a home-look to the drawing-room; and then he walked quickly home.

"Home!" How changed his ideas of that word were now!

Society is very life to the young; loneliness is an atmosphere where "they droop like a plant in drought."

Harry did not call at the Hall till after General Digby had left his card at the Lodge.

"They will think I have no business there! If they are nice people, they will feel embarrassed for me! *they* may fancy *themselves* in the way. I will wait till I am wanted."

That was soon enough. General Digby had a thousand questions to ask about his "old friend Percy

Hall ; and a great deal of pleasure to express in now having the opportunity of making the acquaintance of one of his sons. He tells me, too, that in any difficulties I may apply to you—that you will have the kindness to explain any little matters about the shooting and fishing, upon which, I expect, my son will rush with no small zeal as soon as he can. He is at Oxford at present : he will enjoy the September sport immensely, and your trout-stream will be everything to him when he comes here in June.”

They talked for some time. The General asked him to dinner ; but he declined. Another day was, however, proposed. “I must introduce you to my daughters, and next week we shall have a house full of friends : I hope you will often do us the honour of joining our circle.”

Harry thanked him : “he was very kind ; but he was not very strong yet—he did not venture out late in the evening. A little weakness about his chest had exposed him to the tyranny of the Ferney doctor ; he hoped he would excuse him till he was emancipated from his hands,” &c. &c.

The General was very sorry ; but “he did not see why he should not occupy his own room in the house whenever he chose to do so—nothing would give him greater pleasure,” &c. &c.

But Harry was steady. He shrank from the contrasts which he fancied he should feel under such circumstances.

He took leave, and the General, with the tact of a perfect gentleman, as he was, said, "I will not ring the bell—you are always at home here, remember."

It was as if he had seen into Harry's heart when he first reached the door of the house which, for the time being, was no longer his father's; as if he had seen the deep flush on his face as he rang the bell, and then watched the faded hues on it when, as a *stranger* at that door, he asked "if General Digby was at home."

## CHAPTER XV.

"How many angels unawares have crossed thy casual way !  
How often, in thy journeyings, hast thou made thee instant friends !"  
TOPPER.

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It was not what is called "shyness," so strongly reprobated by Sydney Smith, which deterred Harry from visiting at the Hall, it was simply that he felt unequal to what was so trying to him. It is easy enough to understand the sort of shrinking he must have felt. He knew very well, although no allusion had ever been made to the fact, that *his* debts had added to the weight of care which had forced his parents to seek an alternative, and a certain freedom from anxiety, by giving up their home, and therefore it distressed him to be tacitly reminded of it.

All the guests General Digby had expected arrived in the course of the week following that of Harry's visit, and the invitations to him to join the assembled circle were reiterated without effect. One morning he walked up to the house, resolute in purpose not to remain there longer than he could help, but anxious to impart information to the General upon some business matters which he felt would be better ex-

plained in person. The windows of his mother's morning-room were down to the ground, and those he must pass. In doing so he involuntarily turned his eyes towards the interior, and at the glance, rapid as it was, he took in the whole scene.

On the sofa, where that gentle mother used to rest, there now lounged a fashionable-looking youth, whose attitude and air altogether bespoke an *insouciance* which few had ever betrayed in that room, to which it was considered a privilege to gain admission. There was an appearance of confusion everywhere; the tables covered with unarranged books, and several loose volumes scattered on the floor. A young lady was sitting in *her* chair, another was writing at *her* table; everything looked untidy and *misappropriated*. On the ottoman lay one small dog, and on a cushion another. A great deal of laughing was going on. The sounds seemed discordant to his ears; and without reasoning for one instant on the "only natural and only to be expected" state of things, he quickened his steps towards the entrance, and muttered something about "Dogs—too bad; perfect desecration of her sanctum; bad taste," &c.

At luncheon Miss Digby said to the General, "Papa, had you not a visitor this morning?"

"Yes, Mr. Hall called; I tried to persuade him to remain, and to give me an opportunity of introducing

him to you and Rosa : ” and turning to Lady Singleton, “ I should have requested permission to present him to you and the Miss Singletons ; but nothing would induce him to stay.”

“ Who is he ? ”—from the lady addressed.

“ A younger son of my friend Percy Hall.”

“ A younger son ! Where is the eldest ? I have heard of him. He has a place in this immediate neighbourhood, has he not ? ”

“ So I understand. He has left England with the rest of his family. The Mr. Hall who now lives at the South Lodge, and who is agent to his father’s property, is the only one left at home.”

“ Agent, is he ? ”

“ Yes, and a most intelligent, well-informed young man. I am quite sorry that he will not be persuaded to come amongst us, he would be an acquisition.”

“ What is he like, papa ? ” said Rosa.

“ He is *very* good looking ; and with the sort of air that being in the army has of necessity given him, he walks well : for instance, holds himself well. You know what I mean ; I must not say too much, being a soldier myself.”

“ I understand : but what made him do such a stupid thing as leave the army and become a sort of steward ; for it is literally *that*, is it not ? ” said Lady S——.

"Why the fact that he is representing and acting for his father, gives a sort of dignity to the position; he seems quite high metttled enough, I assure you."

"I think I must have seen your hero yesterday," remarked Sir Herbert Mordaunt, one of the guests; "a very handsome fellow too; he was riding a beautiful horse at a tremendous speed. I never saw such a pace. I took him at first for a *centaur*, for I could see nothing as he flew past but a man's head and shoulders, *they* struck me as being so fine; and the legs of the quadruped he was on, who flew as if he had been winged—*that* must have been your man."

"Most probably."

No more *critiques* were made, no further surmises expressed; and so Harry was left at his lodge in peace for at least another week.

Ferneries were the rage just at this time. Rosa, whose tastes were certainly more rural than Madeline's, had a tendency that way. She "wondered that there were none at Darlton, she would make one directly; there was such a delicious spot for one just where the stream gurgled over the stones near the rockery. She could even convert that into one, but then the Miss Halls might not like it. She wished she *could* see Mr. Hall for a minute, he could tell her of course if there was any objection to her plan."

"But how to see Mr. Hall—*that* is the question ;" said Madeline.

It was of no use waiting to see him, he was "invisible:" so Rosa consented to join the others in a riding excursion ; and although she had no particular *cavalier* to attend her as her sister had—for she always appropriated Sir Herbert—and as the Miss Gages did, who were so wonderfully pretty and rode so beautifully, and who had bewitched both the Mr. Talbots ; or as the Miss Singletons, who always had Mr. Gore, and any other man who might happen to join the cavalcade. "She liked riding, and it would do very well," &c. .

The party were, as usual, in high spirits, but they were getting tired ; and Miss Singleton had twice mentioned her impression "that they should be too late, and have not a minute for dressing ; and you know how particular mamma is about *that* ;" and Miss Mary Gage thought they had better turn when they came to the White Cliff. So they were wending their way home, when Rosa, who lagged behind, proposed that they should all gallop on ; she had seen some lovely ferns outside the park, and she would just stop one minute behind with Michael, and show him where they were, and then they could be transplanted afterwards."

"Rosa always does as she likes about such little

matters," was Madeline's reply to some faint remonstrances made about "going on first and leaving her behind." "The child will come to no harm."

Madeline always would call her a "child," because she was nearly five years younger than she was; and she (the disparity was not so great after all, but then she) would be twenty-one in autumn, and she was *engaged to be married!!!*

Rosa was only *seventeen and as free as air!*

We must use the privilege of authors, and take a glance at the "invisible" hero. He has a great deal to do, and, as we are aware, neither his occupations nor tastes had prepared him for his present avocations; so the business he had to attend to often perplexed him. He wrote to the quondam agent—Mr. Wilmot—for advice and elucidation of his difficulties, but the answers he received did not assist him much. He had spent his morning hours over complicated accounts, and then, to refresh his spirits, had *dashed* out on his horse and had galloped himself into increased unsteadiness, so he threw his pen aside, after a few ineffectual attempts on his return home to resume the work, and sauntered into his back room, the windows of which looked towards the road. He was sitting sadly and listlessly enough, when he heard a sweetly-toned voice say—

"There are some on the hanging bank, which you

can secure at once; the others we can return for to-morrow."

The window of the lodge was so embowered in trees that no one could be seen at it, so Harry looked and listened to his heart's content—

"What a lovely creature!—who can she be? I wonder what they are searching for? How exquisitely beautiful she is!"

There sat Rosa; for she it was who answered to this description. She bent gracefully forward, her reins loosely in her hand, her face turned towards the "invisible." Her large blue eyes lighted up with the radiance of innocence and guileless happiness.—

"Thank you; those are quite beautiful."

The search went on, the "invisible" did not see the person addressed, and, as he had the opportunity, he gave his undivided attention to the object before him:—

"What a bewitching-looking creature!"

Her fair hair was arranged in masses behind, drooping low down; over her forehead—that faultless forehead—it was pushed back (ladies call that style *à l'Impératrice*); her eyebrows were dark and finely pencilled; the complexion was very delicate, the features perfect, the expression angelic! She was mounted on a beautiful Barb, with a flowing mane and tail; her habit was almost black, and her hat, of

the same colour, was decorated with a long white feather.

"You must dismount to reach that large fern ; it looks like the '*Osmunda regalis*.'"

"I am looking, Miss, for a post or somewhat to tie St. Vitus to."

"Oh ! you can bring him to me—I will hold the bridle ; Selim will stand quite still."

She put out her hand, and then Harry saw the groom, to whom she had been talking, move his horse close to the other.—

"Put down the ferns in the shade ; I hope the roots are all right."

"All right, Miss ; I only took those I could reach as I sat : I can dig these others up with my knife, if you please to wait."

Consent was given, and St. Vitus told "to be good and not to wriggle about so much, or to toss his head in that conceited way."

St. Vitus, however, had a strong desire to follow his own inclinations, and did not seem at all patient ; the groom, armed with his knife, was rapidly ascending the high bank, and Rosa's eyes were eagerly following the willing emissary.—

There was nothing in the world which the whole household would not willingly do for Miss Rosa.

Harry longed to offer *his* services ; but he did not dare to do more than look.

Presently St. Vitus became rather restive ; Rosa pulled in the bridle : even Selim looked impatient. Gentle entreaties to "stand still" did not seem to weigh with either of the steeds ; when all at once, on hearing a noise occasioned by some stones rolling into the road from the cliff, the groom's horse made a sudden start, and with a rush breaking the bridle loose, sprang forward and galloped onwards ; Selim gave a simultaneous bound, and his rider, being unprepared for the movement, lost her balance. She sat the first plunges bravely ; but shrieked with alarm. Harry rushed out and was just in time to see her horse rear up—to hear a piercing cry for "help, help !" whilst she was thrown violently on the ground.

His attempts to raise her were at first in vain. Old Grey, who had heard his master rush out, followed instantly, and by their united efforts she was carried to the house. They were so afraid of hurting her, of increasing the injuries which they were sure she must have met with, that a minute or two passed before they could discover that she had only fainted. Insensibility continued, whilst the men gently bore their burden to the sofa at the lodge, and then the usual remedies were applied : still it appeared very

long before animation or consciousness was restored; and when those beautiful blue eyes opened again, they gazed with a strange bewildered expression and a look indicative of acute pain. Muir had instantly despatched her master's groom for the doctor; but before he could arrive it was ascertained that the greatest hurts sustained were a sprained ankle and a bruised arm. The pain of the former was very acute; but the mercy of the preservation from anything worse was so great, the thankfulness of the poor young creature herself so ardent, and that of the attendants on the occasion so sincere, that the sprain and the bruise were put aside as comparatively small matters.

The next anxiety was to break the news of the accident to the father and sister.

The doctor came, pronounced the case to be "nothing very serious, he was glad to say," and then proposed that "before any of the stiffness incident to such a fall could follow, Miss Digby should be moved to the hall."

This was our hero's first introduction.

Rosa was conveyed in a carriage which had been sent for immediately, Harry walked across the grounds by a short cut and prepared the General for her appearance, whilst the groom Michael followed with the fugitive horses—the latter trio looking very much ashamed of themselves.

Rosa made light of her pain, but expressed in glowing terms her sense of Mr. Hall's kindness—

“If it had not been for him, papa, I might have been crushed to death by Selim, for he lay kicking and plunging ever so long, and must have rolled over me.”

General Digby entreated him to remain for the evening. Rosa added—

“Do, pray, and then you will know how I am before you go home.”

That was irresistible.

Once he inwardly ejaculated, “What shall I do?” Echo answered, “Stay!”

## CHAPTER XVI

"Take the good with the evil, for ye all are pensioners of God."

TUPPER.

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FROM that evening might be traced a change in the temperament, mental and physical, of the no longer "Invisible." He dined constantly at the Hall, joined the equestrians in their rides, did not go to church in the adjoining parish, in order to avoid seeing strangers in the "place of his forefathers," and found out such a variety of ferns, each one giving him an excuse for visiting the lovely Rosa, that very soon he felt himself domesticated in his old home. Rosa could not ride, could not walk about the grounds, could not dance: that "fortunate sprain" of hers, as she called it, when talking confidentially to Madeline, kept her still "'hors de combat,' and quite out of *your* way, Maddy, dear: so you ought to be glad, and brings that nice Mr. Hall so constantly to the library with plants and sketches of what my fernery *is to be*; and those amusing books which seem all to belong to his sister Laura, that I really am not the least sorry that I had that tumble."

The General had expressed his surprise that Madeline and the others could leave Rosa behind that day, but the former had defended herself by saying—

“Why, with old Michael I felt she was quite safe: and who could have suspected him of doing so young a thing as to give up St. Vitus to any other hands than his own?”

“Most unfortunate, to be sure.”

But neither Rosa nor Harry thought it so: *they* never complained. Then at Dresden Laura told Augustus one day, after the English mails had come in, “Hal writes in such spirits; his first letters were so melancholy, but now it is quite different. But see here, Guss, *your* intended is actually engaged to Sir Herbert Mordaunt; is not that too bad?”

“Shocking! I am afraid I shall never recover from the blow. When was that settled?”

“He does not say; he only mentions that the marriage is to take place in September, that Sir Herbert is a very nice fellow, that the General is the kindest person in the world, your late intended very handsome, and that everything is going on well. His letter to papa is full of business.”

“Does he say nothing of *his own intended*?”

“Only that he can’t describe her.”

“That is very suspicious; when a man comes to *that*, it is all over with him.”

"I don't see that."

"Don't you? Why can't he describe her?—because he can find no words which could possibly do her justice. He does not dare to trust himself, and all powers of expression fall far short of her merits. Poor dear Hal! I must go to England, if it was only to condole with him."

"When do you go?"

"Not for some little time. I rather wish to travel back with Paget, and he can't leave his post for two or three months."

At that name Laura blushed, made no rejoinder, but turned away her head. She always fancied that people were looking at *her* when they spoke of *him*.

Life at Dresden suited Mr. Hall admirably: he found his way to a studio of some sort or other every day, then he lingered in the library and grand gallery. He became familiar with almost every object of interest in either, and enjoyed his freedom from all business details to a great degree. Sir Frederick Paget and his *Auguste* were the greatest friends the Halls had. Lady Paget took Laura and her mother *en amitié* at once; the bonds of their friendship were drawing closer and closer, and their mutual interests were deepening more and more. Lady Paget had no daughter, only two sons: one, who held a high position at Berlin, and the other, the very "Curly

Paget," whom *we* saw so much of at Darlton, and during Harry's illness at B——.

The mothers liked to talk of their sons, and Laura never tired of listening where Arthur was the theme of their discourse: she put down her work in a great hurry one day, and walked up to the window to pretend to look at some plants there, when Lady Paget said, "If my sons would only give me daughters, how happy I should be!" They would both make excellent husbands. Fred is very handsome, as I have told you, and you have seen Arthur: but their beauty is their least perfection: they are so good, so noble. Sir Frederick wishes to see them married just as much as I do, but he does not wish either of them to settle in this country. No, we want sweet English wives for them, good and pretty, and with some money too; for we are not rich."

Laura heard every word, and broke off, without intending it, a branch covered with young buds.

Mrs. Hall replied that "her desire was very natural."

The conversation was interrupted by Mr. Hall's return from a long ramble, and they had to listen to his raptures about the scenery he had just visited.

The ménage the Halls had formed was on a very liberal scale. Augustus had arranged about horses and carriages, and with his *savoir vivre* had been of

immense use to them ; indeed without him Dresden would have been a very different place to them all. The boys were at a good school, and passed every Saturday and Sunday at home. Madlle. Peri, who had joined them at Paris after her visit to her relatives there, had been allowed to call in the aid of several masters, so that Ethel and Bertha were "getting on wonderfully." Laura had improved in drawing under the instructions of "Herr Meyer" to such a degree that she longed to show her sketches to Captain Paget: she had regular singing lessons besides, and *she* liked Dresden too.

Lady Paget had conceived an idea that the friends with whose society they were so charmed were rich.

"They live in such excellent style, so many comforts about them, such an air of luxury: then no expense is spared about masters, and none, I am very sure, about dress. That dear, sweet Laura, how well she always looks, with her *recherché robe* and *chapeau*, and her perfect *chaussure*; and Madame Hall, what silk she wears, and what lace!"

"Still I don't believe they are rich; at least they are not so in the English acceptance of the word. Hall told me himself that his chief reason for coming abroad was to retrench, that he had lost quite a large fortune by the failure of a bank in his own country, and that he had let his place for three years."

"Ah, well, they don't retrench much, I suspect: what could they have more? But I am sorry you think that they are not rich, for if that pretty Laura had a proper 'dot,' she would do so well for Arthur."

"I see; but, after all, if that old cousin of ours at the Abbey, which it seems is close to Hall's place, would 'shake off this mortal coil,' and leave all he has to the boy, he would be quite rich enough: he would not require money with his wife."

"True; but he may live a long time, and he may not choose to give his money to Arthur."

"He is fond of him by all accounts, and has no one else to leave his wealth to, excepting myself or Fred; and he evidently does not care for us, and does for him."

Lady Paget gave expression to some more of her surmises, which, after all, sprang naturally enough from appearances. The united resources of the father and son were more than equal to all the expense incurred, and Mr. Hall even found at the end of a year that he had something to lay by for the younger children. The Darlton property had never been so well nursed as it was now, under Harry's fostering care. Things were prospering with them all. Horace was at Malta, and greatly enjoyed the kindness and hospitality he received: his spirit seemed as bright

as the clime he lived in ; no shadows, no misgivings, no fears for the future, although 'Bell's Life' did not always confirm his prognostics, and he was not so sure of his own wisdom as he had formerly been. Poor Hal's misfortunes had been a sort of check on his own roving, racing imaginations.

Laura looked grave, and declined going to balls, excepting when Lady Paget made a point of her doing so. She could not forget the remarks she had heard made to her mother, and she knew very well that her father's losses must tell on her future, as far as portion went.

Augustus went to England, and from thence wrote the most interesting and animated details of everything.—“The Digbys are delightful people, the only beings on earth I could bear to see reigning at Darlton in my father's stead, and they cherish Hal with the affection of near relations. He has had Morley and Dormer as his guests ; first one, and then the other. The General said the reinforcement was invaluable to them, for Algernon had too much on his hands : the house was almost always full, and he never knew how to manage, there were so many young ladies.”

He had mentioned to Harry how much he felt this “*embarras de richesse*,” and he had come to the rescue. Lady Elizabeth Gage and her two pretty daughters

were paying a short visit *en passant* to some relations in the south, and D'Arcy Dormer devoted himself to the fair Mary. Algernon discovered that the eldest was the most charming girl he had ever met with ; "so it was not unlikely," as Madeline said, "that her bridesmaids (for the two Gages were to be amongst the number) would have something else to do than attend to *her*, if things went on in that way."

Rosa and Harry were the greatest friends possible ; they always had some especial business of their own in hand : the fernery was becoming quite splendid, the flower-garden was much improved—he was "sure that his mother would think so, owing to Rosa's hints and designs."

Their lives were very innocent and happy ; no care dimmed their future. The General "could not bear the idea of Rosa's growing up to be old enough (he, too, looked upon her as a child) to marry. He dreaded parting with Madeline ; but Sir Herbert's property was in the next county, and when Percy Hall returned to his own place and ejected him, he would try to get some hunting-box in the neighbourhood." So he, too, was contented and at peace.

Augustus took Paget back with him to Dresden, and Laura was in a state of calm delight : he admired her drawings and her singing, called Mrs. Hall his "English mother," and quoted her on all occasions

to his German mother, and in a thousand ways riveted still closer the chains he had already bound the Saxon beauty in. Every one admired Laura; she was, indeed, fair and fascinating.

Arthur told his father how "entirely his whole soul was wrapped up in her." And he did "not wonder; only," as he added with great emphasis, "what could you marry on?"

"Curly Paget" arranged and re-arranged, pushed in every direction the luxuriant hair which covered the head which seemed so utterly puzzled with the question, and then was "sure he did not know!"

No light dawned on the subject, and Captain Paget returned to his regiment; he had said nothing definite to Laura, and for another year they were separated. She never turned her eyes towards the military pageants which at that time Dresden gloried in, without feeling that they glistened with something very like tears. She never looked on the entrenched camps of Stolpein or Königstein without an emotion which she could not help: HER soldier was a far nobler being than any of those who trod the ramparts there; but he was hidden to her sight—alas! alas! The heavy mists of suspense were fast gathering around her! Where was the sun which would dispel them? Where the fortune, without which the barrier

between two such true and loving hearts could never be removed?

"Laura does not look well; she seems to have lost her natural elasticity; perhaps she requires change of air," said Mr. Hall.

The observant mother replied, "It might do her good if you took her into other scenes."

So *that* plan was tried. Laura returned from an expedition amongst the mountains at the end of three weeks; but she did not look much better. Things went on in this way for another year: the "English mother" longed for the arrival of her curly-headed son, and trusted that in time the "course of love would run smooth."

There can be no harm in anticipating—*we* who know how events *did* turn out may as well raise the veil which at this time was obscuring to the lovers the realities of the future.

Old Frost Paget died one night. His will could not be found at first; but at the end of a week it was discovered. He had left the abbey and other property, to the amount of four thousand a year, to Arthur Paget, captain in the —th, "his dearly-beloved kinsman;" but made one conditional request, viz., "that he should leave the army directly and settle at the abbey!"

“What a good old Frost it was!”

Never were behests more readily agreed to. The result is clear to us all: the young pair were fixed at the abbey in an incredibly short time. Sir Frederick and Lady Paget were delighted; so were the Halls. The former were to be in England before the winter set in, and in a few months more the term of banishment from Darlton would expire, and *then* how • transcendently happy they should all be!

And so they were!

General Digby found a place near his old friend Percy, and not too far from the Mordaunts. Harry had done wonders: well, indeed, had he performed the duties of his stewardship! Augustus proposed that he should take possession of Ferney manor now that his father could spare him, for really everything was in such perfect order; “the affairs of state” were in so flourishing a condition, that now even old Smith could keep matters straight; and then in another year Rosa Digby will be older, and—

If we follow up the elder brother’s idea, what a vista we look into!

Rosa had fortune, so there was no stumbling-block in the way.

The General was resigned! Algernon and Fanny Gage were to be married first: “he should have a daughter secured to him in his own house;” for the

young ones were to give him a shelter in his old age. "He should be near Madeline and Rosa, too; he was very thankful and happy. He had liked young Hall from the first moment they met, and as to Augustus, he only wished he had another daughter for him, too," &c.

When the offer of abdication in favour of the younger brother was made by the elder, the parents had remonstrated; his reply had been—

"I cannot leave you; do not ask me. My joy is to be with you, my father, my mother!" and then in his full rich voice he uttered those touching words of the duteous Ruth—

"Wo Du hingehst, da will ich auch hingehen;  
Wo Du bleibest, da bleibe ich auch."

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\* *Trans.*—"Whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge."—*Ruth* i. 16.

## CHAPTER XVII.

“ La vie est un voyage.”

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It has been a great comfort to us all to be able to leave one of those in whom we have naturally felt more than a passing interest in such a happy position.

Harry, after a probation of three years, in which he had proved the strength of his principles and had kept his resolutions of amendment and self-denial with perfect steadiness, deserved something from our hands; for it is not to be supposed that he escaped all temptation, or that his inclinations, suddenly checked as they were, all turned the right way at once. He had occasional conflicts with himself; and when his late brother officers visited him in his retirement, he sometimes felt his old tastes revived and stirred up to a wonderful degree: however, his conscience was very tender—it always had been so; and Morley was a judicious friend as well as a kind one—so was D’Arcy Dormer. *They* never tried to divert him from the course which they saw was a safe one: Lorton did, and one or two others; but he was brave

and resolute. One little incident we must not forget to mention.

Morley was lamenting one morning, after the post came in, that his rich uncle was so obdurate and so "steel-hearted" about money.

Hal asked him "why at that moment he so particularly lamented over what he must be accustomed to by that time," and added, "do you want it for yourself? it is not like you to be in need."

"Not for myself, but for this poor fellow: do you see what a mess he is in? and, after all, it is not *all* his own fault—you may look at his letter."

"It is not so bad, at least not hopeless: you can help him," replied Hal, after a careful perusal.

"I! I have not at this moment fifty pounds to spare, and you see a hundred is wanted."

"It is not much: would you give it to him if you had it?"

"Certainly."

"Then you have it."

Hal was absent a minute, and then returned with a purse in his hand:—"Do you see this crumpled bit of paper? 'don't light your cigar with it:' do you remember who said *that* to me more than three years ago? The first hundred pounds I could call my own I put aside to repay that debt."

"It was no debt, my dear fellow: I gave it you; it

was a trifling gage d'amitié. Oh! I can't take *that* back again."

"Not! when I tell you that I have plenty to spare—that I am, in fact, very rich, for I always now have at least a hundred more than I require out of my yearly income."

"How do you manage that?"

"My father gives me a hundred and fifty pounds a year, and he made over the farm at Whitethorn to me when I became his agent. I have always cleared money by that, and my expenses are next to nothing."

"What! with your three servants and your horse and your housekeeping!"

"Yes, with all that; that bit of paper has been waiting for you for more than a year. I can never tell you what a comfort the original was to me, little as I deserved it."

Morley appropriated the contents of the purse to the relief of his friend, and then the companions commented on the surpassing pleasure of being able to help others, and the impossibility of doing so if people were extravagant. Harry Hall has proved the truth of this; and, as we said before, it is a great comfort to look at him now and see how happy he is: but then it must be remembered that few, very few youths are so fortunate as he is. There are not many fathers

like Percy Hall, or brothers like Guss ; and the world is not full of beautiful Rosas.

It seems a long time since we were at the Hermitage and saw dear Lady Aubrey. No life on earth is undisturbed by care, and we have seen that no common share had been mingled in her young days ; but the working of events had produced a great calm in her home atmosphere, and it was there that she sought her happiness. She and Sir Edgar had retired very much from what is called "the world : " Mr. and Mrs. Colville did so very naturally—for age bears with it a gradually increasing distaste for what are the more peculiar interests of the "busy scene." Little Edgar had made good use of the three years which had been added to his life, and was certainly a most charming child. There had been a dissolution of Parliament, and it did not suit the "Aubrey," who was still as popular amongst his constituents as he had ever been in his palmy days, to encounter the expense of re-election : so there he was without M.P. at the end of his titles, and with time at his command to do a great many still good and useful things.

Clara was looking rather pale and touchingly delicate the first day we intruded on her privacy ; but the expression in her sweet face was as beautiful as ever : she looked perfectly happy and more than

contented. Mr. Colville was sitting close to the sofa on which a thing, which people call a *bassinette*, was placed. It was a pretty mass of pink and white draperies, and looked as fresh as Lady Aubrey's muslin wrapper, which grandpapa had just been eulogizing as a "most becoming dress." Every now and then Clara walked up to it and peeped in: "How she sleeps! There never was so good a baby; there she has been ever since she came in from her walk." (It is always considered a great moral perfection in an infant if it sleeps well, and *vice versâ*, a strong proof of original sin if the poor little creature has disturbed rest.) Presently the piece of perfection alluded to moved, and then it was removed from its cradle (for that was the thing it was enshrined in), and it was told over and over again that it was "a darling and a treasure of goodness, and the sweetest of pets—only too lovely," &c.

Eleanor Aubrey was really very attractive! When she walked in the park she was saluted by admiring mammas, and the nurse who carried her was *envied* to her heart's content.

"It is a pleasure and a honour to have such a baby in my arms, my lady. Every body says it is the beautifullest that ever was seen, though Mr. Dalton do declare that Master Aubrey was almost beautifuler, bless him!"

The benediction was evidently added as an *amende* to the assertion of the sister's implied superiority.

The addition of the baby was a great embellishment to Clara's life—the soft, pretty, fat plaything at one moment, the object of freshly-awakened and deeper interests at another: it made the Hermitage quite complete, and gave an impetus to some of the principles which were comparatively of recent growth in the mother's nature.

“Look, dear mamma, see what a clever ‘practical economist’ I am! I have arranged such a bewitching mantle for the baby out of one of my court trains; won't it do charmingly?”

And she held up a white silk fabric, lined with the same colour and trimmed with green:—

“Dalton is making a new hood for her, and I don't spend a sou. Once I should have written off to Moon and desired her to send me the prettiest she could make, and I should never have thought of the expense: I am afraid I was very reckless, very extravagant in those days; but I never get a new thing now. Dalton twists about those I had into new shapes, and it is quite amusing to make contrivances; and I have such a quantity of resources.”

It was very well for her that she had; but court-dresses and numberless adornments are not

always at the command of those who are "fallen in fortune."

Clara was a sweet-tempered creature and made the best of everything, and had done what she called "turning over a new leaf" with perfect grace and cheerfulness. Still her lot was not one of depression or poverty, and so people may say, "Ah! it is all very easy for her; think how different *my* position is, and how many I have to provide for. Lady Aubrey is not to be pitied; how much she still has!"

That was quite true; but there was a change fast approaching.

Sir Edgar had occupied some of his spare time by going more minutely into the details of family expenses. He *had* trusted all that sort of thing more entirely to Clara; but "it was not," as she said, "much in her way." He said one evening, after a silence of some length—

"Do you think that Mr. and Mrs. Colville would miss the carriage and horses much if we put them down?"

"Papa and mamma? I am sure I don't know. Why do you ask?"

"Because I find that we must make some retrenchment of that sort, and I fancied that perhaps they would feel that the least."

"Why do you think we must make any more sacrifices?"

"I find we have for the last three years spent more than our income, and that won't do; we shall get involved in time, if we don't take care."

"Oh! that would be dreadful! I don't think I have been the least extravagant or careless; I can't understand our not having enough, living as we do."

"The result of my examinations proves that we have spent too much. It was very difficult at first to know what we could do and what we could not do; and I can't think of anything but giving up the horses."

"I am sure neither papa nor mamma would object. The pony carriage is very useful; but as you have no riding-horse now and no groom, what should we do if the coachman went too? One could not let the footman go into the stables even occasionally, for he would bring that horrid *odeur* into the house. It is very puzzling: I will talk to mamma about it all."

The carriage and horses were dispensed with. Some arrangement was made with one of the under-gardeners, and the obnoxious aroma from the stables did not offend! Clara was quite satisfied. It was only to go to town when the Bromleys or Eltons, &c., were there, and to take the baby to see Lord Acton, who expected a visit at least once a month, that she cared about having the carriage: she must give up that—perhaps they would come and see her oftener.

The worst of it was that Edgar kept looking graver and graver, and at the end of another year he said—

“I fear we must leave this place—it is too expensive, we cannot afford it; we must let it.”

“I am *so* sorry: mamma is so well and so happy here, and so is papa, and the children get on so delightfully; and where could we go to?”

“*That* is another question. We shall find no difficulty in getting another house—it is the pain of uprooting your parents that we shall shrink from most. I have thought a great deal upon the subject before I ventured to disturb you with it: it is only necessity which forces me to propose what will annoy you and them; you know, dearest, that if I could save you I would.”

“Yes, I know that. Shall I ask papa and mamma, or will you?”

“I think it will be better if I speak to your father first; perhaps he can propose some plan.”

Mr. Colville saw at once that they ought to leave their present luxurious home: the rent such a place as the Hermitage would fetch was sure to be large, probably not less than five hundred or six hundred pounds a year—people gave so much for furnished houses at that distance from town; “and it is rather a remarkable incident,” said Mr. C., “that by this afternoon’s post I have a letter from Richard’s agent

to tell me that the tenants of the cottage in H——, which I kept in my own hands, mean to give it up next month. It is furnished in a sort of way—but I have not been there for years: it would hold us. Eleanor used to like it as a change of air for the children in old days. The Raven's Nest, as it is called, is well situated; it is healthy, and within five miles of D——. Suppose we propose to the ladies a flight to that part of the coast?"

"Oh! yes, it will do nicely!" both Mrs. Colville and Clara decided.

The Hermitage was let.

The Colvilles, Aubreys, children and all, left the smiling scenes they had rejoiced in, "and went," as little Edgar said, "into a far country."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"It is not the events which befall us, but the spirit in which we meet them, that decides the happiness or unhappiness of our lives."

ST. ROCHE.

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It was, indeed, far from former ties, and utterly separated from any interests, excepting those which accompanied the travelling party: they had a "world in themselves:" but to be entirely confined to that "world" had never been Clara's fate before.

"I am afraid you will find this spot very *triste*," Mr. Colville said to her, the first morning after their arrival at the Raven's Nest. "You see it is sheltered from the north and east; but the whole scene looks desolate after the home we have just left."

"It is certainly very different; and I had almost forgotten the principal features of it. I had a dim recollection of high rocks or cliffs, and then a rough beach; but I thought I remembered rather a large garden, and two little ones at the side which belonged to Richard and me; and *now* I can't trace them. You know one's ideas as children are so magnificent: but I think we shall all be very happy

here. There is only one amendment upon the general plans which I should propose, and that is, that some arrangement should be made at once about a riding-horse for Edgar ; we shall be able to afford it, and he will find it very stupid to be without one : you and mamma I can drive out in the little carriage, and I see there is a donkey for the boy. But Edgar is not accustomed to be so circumscribed in his actions as we are."

There could be no objection ; so in another week Sir Edgar was mounted on a sure-footed steed, and enjoyed his long rides very much. There was a curious musty smell, mingled with that of sea-weed, in the rooms, and by daylight things looked faded and soiled.

The last tenants had delighted in dogs, and *they* had left evidence behind them that sofas and easy chairs had been their usual resting-places.

"We shall soon set this to rights : some new chintz and fresh carpets, and clean curtains, will brighten us up ; we can go to D—— some day soon, I dare say ; there are wonderful shops there."

And they were "wonderful" indeed, as Clara found. The chintzes were either specimens of the taste of the last century, with birds and their nests, or shepherdesses and lambs, which put one in mind of Watts's hymns ; or they had pagodas, with blue roofs and pink walls

on them, or subjects quite as incongruous and hideous.

"Have you nothing modern, nothing simple?" was Lady Aubrey's question.

"Oh, yes, my Lady, some sweet things:" and then there was a display of a leopard-skin pattern, in small spots, and a speckled brown and white fabric, which looked like 'plum-pudding stone,' as geologists call that curious compound of granite and marble which is found on the English coast. Still Clara could not be tempted.

"I see we must wait, and get patterns from town. I can't bear ugly things, they spoil the atmosphere around one."

In time the rooms looked very different. New table-covers, one or two flower-baskets, work-boxes, with several moveable book-stands, which had been brought from the Hermitage, very soon produced an improved air. Mrs. Colville and Clara declared that "now they felt quite at home."

However, this repose was not to be indulged in for long. The next morning Sir Edgar was explaining to his boy, in language suited to his young comprehension, what "tides" were. "They are always going out and coming in." "Papa, I don't see them; where are they?" was the child's investigating address.

Clara listened to the papa's elucidations, and then went to speak to Dalton, who was still at the head of domestic affairs, and who requested an audience.

She returned, saying, "I am sure 'There is a *tide* in the affairs of men.' What shall I do, mamma? All the women—excepting Dalton and Pheemy, who form the home administration—have resigned. They graciously grant me one month, but request that their places may be filled at the end of that time."

"What has produced this change of affairs, and the immediate desire to leave office?"

"I hear that they find this spot insupportably dull: the expression is, that 'they cannot abide it.'"

"It is very troublesome," replied Mrs. C.; "and especially to you who so rarely make changes in your household; but I do not suppose you will find any difficulty in getting new ones. Dalton can go to S—— and inquire for others; had she not better set off this afternoon?"

"I dare say *that* will be the best plan. I only hope the changes will stop here; it would be so very irksome to papa to have a new attendant about his person; and Norris may choose to go too, and then Philip is sure to follow in his train. Edgar won't like this sudden revolution: how tiresome it is!"

"Still we must make the best of it."

Upon this principle Lady Aubrey acted; and as no disaffection was shown by the men, *that* trouble was overcome. The new servants knew no better, so were contented with the Raven's Nest, which, in that neighbourhood, was considered an important place.

The house was not the least like a "cottage," although Mr. Colville spoke of it under that denomination. It was built of a grey stone, and was *not* thatched; it had a porch, and two rustic gates; offices which were rather too prominent to be picturesque; and an approach, which, in its attempts to be circuitous, and therefore more imposing in length, left off with so sudden a turn, that if you were in a carriage you felt afraid of being jerked in at one of the windows, or, if you were walking, impelled to cut the matter short and walk straight across the flower-beds which bordered the drives.

There was one spare room. "And if," said Clara, "my Rose-buds insist upon 'looking after me to see what I am at,' as they threatened to do this autumn, I can put them both into that, and their maid into the dressing-room."

Thus she amused herself by forming plans for the future, and, in the mean time, enjoyed the effect produced on her children by the change of air. Their fat little cheeks were of a more rosy hue, and it was

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easy to see that nothing could be better for them. Mr. and Mrs. Colville occasionally indulged in retrospects, and talked of the past, in contrast with their present peaceful state, till they both agreed that, excepting for the sake of their children (meaning the Aubreys), they could desire nothing more. The calm sea before them filled them with serenity, and was in perfect sympathy with their feelings: then the boundless view of the ocean in its stillness and tranquillity, by its soothing influence dispelled every thought which could produce inquietude, and left them on the confines of that past in a blessedly quiescent state.

We have seen how the discipline of life had worked in Clara's case, and how impervious she was to minor ills; but it is not to be expected that the struggles in her every-day course had entirely ceased. One drawback to her present home she felt very much—she was utterly separated from her chosen associates. They were not numerous, as we know; for comparatively few had stood the test which her changed circumstances had put them to. Yet there “were dear Mrs. de Vere, Lord Elton, and the Actons, her steady friends the Bromleys, and the Duchess of B——, who never changed, and who never would or could be otherwise in her eyes than the most delightful people in the world.”

People say that "speed annihilates distance;" but not one of the inhabitants of the Raven's Nest *felt* this, although their journey to it had been almost *breathlessly* rapid. "It is like being in another hemisphere; people look so different, their very voices are unlike those of the persons to whom we have hitherto listened, and the very ideas which in our world were considered obsolete, are brought out here as something new. I hope you don't think me wrong for almost *pinning* after my old friends, and shrinking from new acquaintances," was Lady Aubrey's reply to Mr. Colville's question of "When she meant to return the visits which had been paid her by the neighbouring inhabitants of Westport?" and his passing comments which in his good nature he made into gentle encomiums on them.

There was a Captain Scott, and a very fat, dowdy Mrs. Scott, a Mr. and Mrs. Smith, a trio of broken-down spinsters, and one or two very loquacious single ladies, who had emerged from the row of villas and small white houses which skirted the sea-shore, about a mile from *the Nest*.

Lady Aubrey had been told by each and all that she had "a sweet pretty place, a charming garden, the best drawing-room, and largest house, on that part of the coast; and such a view!" She had been asked "How she liked the place?" till she was quite

tired of saying, "Very much indeed;" and of adding, "it is not new to me, I have been here as a child," &c. &c. Mr. Colville assured her that "the Vicar and his young wife were very nice people; Mr. Darby seems bent on doing good, and her energies are all turned the same way: and really it is a most important advantage to us as his parishioners; for we ought to be often in contact with them if we hope to do any good amongst the poor fishermen and their families; they can tell us all about them, and without a certain degree of guidance from them we cannot hope to be very useful."

The Raven's Nest was nearly a mile from the beach in some parts, although the road looked as if it went to it in a direct line. Between it and the shore there was a clump of small cottages, one of them larger than the others, and this was designated an inn, "The Anchor" it was called; and it had been known as a place of refuge after many a storm. The landlord, Billy Heron, was very kind-hearted, and so was his dame. Clara often heard of their kind deeds, and had felt especial satisfaction in presenting Mrs. Heron with several pair of new warm blankets, for the use of "the poor dripping, shivering creatures that were oftentimes cast on the hands" of the compassionate old woman.

Many a time Clara listened to "the wonders of

the deep," as the simple pair described them, and felt the glow of happiness which the power of relieving the sufferers she heard of gave her.

"Remember always to send up to us for what you require, and have not at your own command, when any of those terrific wrecks happen"—was an injunction not likely to be forgotten.

And thus she trod a path of usefulness, which we may be sure led to peace. Although the monotony of her life remained for a time unvaried by the companionship of her former associates, although in the visits which duty impelled her to make to those amongst whom "her lot was cast" she saw none of the refinement which had hitherto seemed as essential to her as the air she breathed, she betrayed no reluctance to exchange courtesies and kindnesses with them, and with the halo of increased contentment round her she looked upon the opportunities of usefulness to others, now granted to her, as a privilege for which she was bound to be thankful.

Her *home* duties were her *recreations*. Sir Edgar taught his boy everything, and the little Eleanor was her own unceasing delight, and more peculiar source of occupation.

It was a calm life—"the world forgetting, and by the world forgot."

## CHAPTER XIX.

“ Down came the storm, and smote amain  
The vessel in its strength ;  
She shuddered and paused like a frightened steed,  
Then leaped her cable's length.”

“ O Father ! I hear the sound of guns ;  
O say what may it be ?  
Some ship in distress, that cannot live  
In such an angry sea ! ”

LONGFELLOW.

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SUMMER months were passing quickly away, and those of autumn rapidly approaching. No varieties worth recording had occurred in the daily routine at the Raven's Nest ; but an episode in the lives of the circle there was expected. An invitation to Holte Castle had been accepted, and early in September the partridges were to be assailed by Sir Edgar and “other guns.” Mr. Colville had “retired from the field,” he said ; so the excuse for *his* going was that neither Lady Mary nor the host “could do without him.” She said, “Papa, too, will be lost without him, and dear Mrs. Colville : then of course the children, who were part of Lady Aubrey, and never separated from her, were to come.” So a cavalcade

of nine persons issued forth on the 31st of August, and reached their destination just in time to see Lord Acton arrive with the Rosebuds clinging to him, and to be welcomed with the warmest affection, whilst on the very threshold of the Castle (for they were told "that the drawbridge should not be let down *till* they *promised*") they were forced "to vow that if nothing unexpected occurred to force a retreat, they were to remain in those strongholds for six weeks."

How swiftly those weeks passed! We can imagine how intensely Clara enjoyed the society of her friends—how more than ever congenial to her taste they were—how charming the whole scene was, and how delightful the anticipations of similar future enjoyment to those who had not been so checked in their outset in life as to make them unable to *look forward*.

"It has been so easy to get here, and it is so enchanting to be with them all again, that I feel as if I could find no words to express what I mean when I talk of it all. I never even appreciated my buds as I do now, or any of them; and it is almost better than being at the Hermitage, for I don't feel *hurried* in my enjoyment of them, and I remember always having an indistinct dread that they would be going away again directly when they came from town: it used to spoil my pleasure. We settled last night

that it will be a good plan to come here every autumn: how Edgar enjoys it all!"

Neither Sir Edgar nor her parents ever restrained her exuberant spirits: society was to her the "elixir vitæ;" why should she not taste it when she could?

Miss Ashton came to the Castle for three days, and every one thought her improved; even Mr. Colville acknowledged that she "had had an air '*trop prononcée*' the year before; but that she had softened down, and after all, she was a kind-hearted, useful person, and very fond of the children." Little Edgar adhered to her with peculiar tenacity, and entreated her in an urgent manner "not to go away."

Lady Susan's asperities were found quite endurable when she passed a fortnight with her nieces, and the weather was charming: what could they desire more? It was clear, and not too cold; did not rain more than was absolutely necessary—which was certainly saying a great deal for this green, brown, and yellow island of ours. No one ever expected it to do anything else in the "Emerald Isle," but a wet September with us is not agreeable.

Mrs. de Vere was entreated to visit the Capels, and every inducement was held out to her; but she never left Mr. de Vere, and he never left B——.

"Some day or other," said Clara, "I shall find myself at her side again; I don't despair of anything

now, for the links which bound me to the cliffs are broken. They can never be riveted together so closely again; and yet when we first fixed ourselves there I thought I never should be set free, and with that sensation all the elasticity of my nature evaporated: it is quite different *now*."

About the middle of October the whole party returned to what Clara had once called her "captivity." The change had done them all good, and with renewed energy she and her mother resumed their "labour of love."

The weather began to be stormy. Thunder and lightning, the usual precursors of tempest, had held their sway, and the fishermen all knew what would come next.

A gale had blown for a night and a day: the time had been one of fear and suspense, when news was brought that the little fishing vessel which belonged to Hugh Miles was lost. Deep commiseration was felt by Clara and her circle for the surviving sufferers, and it was carried out into immediate action on her part: she hastened to the hut where the young widow was weeping in her sudden desolation, and was the first to still the tumult of her grief—the first whose words of comfort reached the stricken mother of the youth who had cherished her in his home ever since she had lost her own. The neigh-

bours in their homely way offered sympathy and help ; but their words seemed to fall unheeded to the ground. At times in a stupor of affliction, at others in wild bursts of woe, the power of reaching the lacerated hearts seemed denied to all but Clara. Whether it was the melody of her voice, or the gentle pressure of her hand, or the expression of her tearful eye, one cannot tell ; but at her approach the grief of the mourners was stilled, and their attention to the words she uttered awakened : and then it was that in the fulness of her sympathizing heart she felt how blessed it was to “ weep with those who wept,” how elevating to her nature was the privilege of ministering to the broken-hearted, and how far surpassing in depth and worth the comfort to herself, which her present mission brought with it, compared to the brightest gleams of worldly pleasure which she had ever known.

When she told the bereaved widow to remember that the Almighty, Who had taken her best earthly stay from her and had guided him in safety to the haven of eternal rest, was, in Holy Scripture, called “ the God of the widow, the Father of the fatherless,” the poor young creature raised her drooping head and gazed with searching eyes (even dimmed as they were by tears) for more of the vital truth which was, indeed, strength and life to her, and said, “ Oh ! repeat

those words again, my lady : tell me of the Love and Mercy that never faileth ; tell me of His long-suffering compassion, of His tender care, of His lovingkindness to my Hugh, and I can bear everything.” And then Clara would, in her simple and impressive language, pour out the rich consolations which she had gathered in her own time of need, and had then garnered up in her soul.

To the mourning mother of the son who had been her earthly refuge from the storms of life, her safeguard from poverty and ill, and whose hands were, as she said, “those which would have smoothed her grey hairs and followed her to her grave,” she spoke of the hopes beyond that grave, and led her to dwell on the state to which she was herself hastening—for the close of the weary pilgrimage seemed indeed far nearer since her loss, so feeble had she become under the pressure of her great grief.

“I shall soon be with my boy ; I can see, even now, why my God willed that I, his aged mother, should survive him—that there should be no love to draw me down to earth when he was with my Saviour in Heaven ! I can see His gracious goodness towards me ! I can hear His glorious voice saying, ‘*I, even I, am he that comforteth you !*’ And when I listen to you, I feel that a healing balm comes with your blessed words.”

It was even so ; and thus it will ever be to those who mourn, if their hearts are with Him Who bought them with a price, which in their own anguish, imperfect as the conceptions of the finite mind must ever be, they can better comprehend.

It is not even too much to say to those who are crushed by the keenest sorrow, the bitterest grief, the greatest loss, they can ever know on earth, that if they will trust with their whole hearts Him who redeemed them at such a cost—

“ They shall obtain gladness and joy ;  
And sorrow and mourning shall flee away.”

Clara did not go alone on her missions of mercy : very often her mother went with her, and sometimes little Edgar was allowed to walk by their sides and to carry the basket of comforts which were needed in most cases. It was a good plan for more especially interesting the child, who might some day be called on to fill a station from whence good works ought to emanate as a matter of course.

When Mrs. Colville and Clara saw how comparatively easy it was to supply the humble wants of those claimants on their kindness, which their residence on this part of the coast brought before them, they felt more strongly than ever that self-denial on their own parts brought with it a sweet reward.

They did a great deal without ostentation, and

effected by judicious management of their resources much more than they had imagined possible.

It was touching to see and to hear the effects produced on the suffering ones: they were like angels of mercy to many a bereaved one, and surely in such a path there was much pleasantness.

There was no harbour at W——. Vessels never neared that coast by choice; for there were projecting rocks, hidden shoals, and uncertain currents. Navigators knew there were dangers there to be avoided; but in stormy weather the ablest steersman sometimes found himself driven into peril which no foresight *could* avert.

No one could be otherwise than interested in the aspect of that vast ocean, the *stirrings* of which portended so much evil. Very exciting it was to the watcher, who stood in safety on the beach, to see the “roaring breakers,” or to listen to the “trampling surf.” You could not help trembling for the beings who were tossed to and fro on the face of that mighty deep, and many an anxious gaze was bent on the scene—many a heart heaved with dread when the fierce billows beat against the rocks.

It was in the dead of the night on the 27th that guns of distress reverberated amongst the cliffs and roused the sleepers from repose. Sir Edgar had been

sitting up till late by Mr. Colville's side, who had caught cold by lingering on the shore, and whose illnesses, although not frequent, were alarming when they seized him. His wife and daughter had retired, exhausted by their watchings; and after listening to the sounds now so familiar to them, they had prayed still more earnestly for those who "journeyed by sea." Aroused from slumber by such a summons, it was only natural that their first care should be to send down every available succour to those whose cry for aid had thus reached them; and with as little delay as possible all who could face the storm, which beat against the house with appalling force, were assembled.

The life-boat was manned by the intrepid sailors; but it was long before the raging tempest enabled it to make way towards the ship, whose peril seemed beyond any human assuagement. For hours the hurricane blew, and baffled every hope!

When daylight dawned there came no visible change, although there was a slight but very temporary lull.

It was then that Clara hastened to the "Anchor" to be in readiness, and that Sir Edgar and all the men of the household, leaving the rocks, where their presence could avail nothing and where they had

been stationed for hours, gathered round her in the hope that if any were rescued from a watery grave, their services might be of use.

There were many tremblers there. The wives and daughters of the brave men who were risking their lives in the hope of saving others formed a group which no one could look on without emotion.

Clara spoke words of faith and encouragement to all, endeavoured to make their trust more steadfast, their reliance on the "arm mighty to save" more strong, their hopes of relief more vivid, and was herself composed under the mighty dread which she shared with all who looked upon the workings of that terrific whirlwind.

Amidst all she was calm,

"And she thought of Christ, who stilled the wave  
On the lake of Galilee."

## CHAPTER XX.

“ Lord, save us : we perish.”

*St. Matt. viii. 23.*

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SUSPENSE and anxiety seemed to have reached their climax, hope was verging on despair, and the intense alarm which had hitherto stimulated the watchers was subsiding into utter despondency, when a shout from those nearest the shore reached the “Anchor.”

The wreck (for every mast was gone) was descried in the distance still struggling with impending fate, whilst the lifeboat, which looked like a small black speck on the darkly-foaming mountains formed by the waves, sank and rose again. At times it seemed lost for ever, the distance between the furrowed heights appeared more and more awful, and the struggles to rise out of the fearful gulf beyond the power of human strength. Contention with the stormy elements in such terrific scenes must indeed to the spectators ever seem hopelessly futile.

To those who “occupy their business in great waters—who see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep,” there is more vigour of action given, more strength for the immediate call on them,

than we can possibly realize. Here it is that "their soul melteth away, because of the trouble;" but with faith which their dire peril increases more and more, "they cry unto Him who maketh the storm to cease, so that the waves thereof are still, and He delivereth them out of their distress."

Nearer and nearer came the laden boat: all were safe.

Thanksgivings were deeply felt, but few had voice to utter them: the wives and mothers pressed forward, and *to them* all gave way. Ten persons had been rescued; the captain and crew remained still clinging to their post: fresh hope kindled in their breasts, for the tempest was abating, and steadfast in their purpose not to yield till their desertion of their ship was a more imperative duty still.

Of those who were saved alive four persons seemed in a hopeless condition from exhaustion: an aged man, a fragile-looking young woman, a man and a boy, were borne at once to the "Anchor," where every thing was under Lady Aubrey's directions in readiness for the sufferers.

By degrees the younger ones evinced returning strength; but the old man continued in a state of apparently hopeless prostration.

The doctor shook his head, and Dame Heron said "he could not live—she had seen too many die to

doubt it." Even Billy Heron was desponding, and Sir Edgar felt they were right : Clara alone cherished hope, and entreated that "she might be left to watch and try a little longer ; she was not needed at home, for Mr. Colville was better, and Sir Edgar and her mother would be with him."

Her entreaties were yielded to, and till near the close of day she was at the side of her charge. "Whilst there is life there is hope." She never left her patient for an instant, never wearied in her work of Christian labour, till symptoms of life confirmed that hope and rewarded her unceasing efforts.

The reaction after such utter prostration was naturally slow, and, as is not unfrequently the case, slight fever ensued.

The nurse who attended the invalid said, "he wandered all night long, and spoke of angels, just as if he seed them close by."

This was thought a fearful sign by Dame Heron, and was looked upon by both the women as a certain precursor of death.

When Clara came to visit him the next morning, she saw nothing indicative of peculiar excitement ; but after giving her own aid and many directions about the management of her "poor old man," as she called him, she was hastening from the room, when in a piteously entreating voice he said—

“Oh! stay, my Lady! Those women told you I was delirious because I talked of angels. Are you not one to me? Have you not saved me a second time from the brink of the grave? I pray that the Almighty may further spare my life that I may be able, if even a short time is yet granted me, to show my gratitude. There is one to whom I already owe more than my life, and as soon as I have strength I must begin my search after him: till then I must be patient.”

Clara listened, and endeavoured to soothe him by the assurance that if he kept himself in a calm state he might be able to move in about a week. “In a day or two,” she added, “Sir Edgar will come to you and see what he can do to be useful to you; but you must not talk now.”

Things continued in this state for some days. “Mr. Arnold,” as the young couple who had been brought to the inn at the same time styled him, had no appearance of poverty about him. After the storm ceased, some of the goods from the vessel had been brought to shore, and amongst them several boxes, with the initials “G. A.” on them, were placed in his room. On seeing one of them he expressed particular satisfaction, and seemed after its repossession to subside into a more tranquil state.

One day little Edgar was taken to see Mr. Arnold,

and evidently attracted his attention in a remarkable manner: he kept saying to himself every now and then, "That child is the only being I have ever seen with those eyes, excepting him; but I must not wear myself out with fancies."

He asked the boy one day, when he was alone with him for a minute, "What his mother's name was before she married?" but little Edgar, with all his intelligence, could not answer him. "She has no name; but mamma, papa and grandpapa, and grand-mamma, call her Clara, and the servants call her my lady, and the other people Lady Aubrey."

From the women of the inn he could gain little more: she was her "ladyship;" to them that was all. So old Arnold suppressed his curiosity and remained passive.

The couple who had been his fellow voyagers, and who were addressed by him as Mr. and Mrs. Basil, were recruited enough to travel, and having collected their packages together and arranged about their journey, begged to be allowed to take leave of him.

Clara was in the room when they were admitted, and, on being requested to remain, she retained her post at the old man's side whilst the Basils made their adieus.

The young woman seemed especially overcome, and with a voice broken by emotion tried to express

the fulness of her heart: "May God bless you, Sir, and reward you even in this life for all you have done for us. We can never cease to pray for your happiness, and we can never forget your goodness to us in our time of need: you have been a father to the fatherless. May He whom you serve long preserve you!"

Mr. Basil said but little, for he, too, was much overcome. Once he turned with a look of explanation to Lady Aubrey, and said, "He saved us from misery, and all we now possess we owe to him."

The parting was quite affecting, for Arnold evidently felt that he should never see them again; and, as he had said to Lady Aubrey, "they had been a deep interest to him for the last two years; they had been thrown together then in a foreign land; and, as their roads were now to be very different, he could not hope to meet them again in this life."

Clara wished that she could have gained some information about her protégé from the Basils; but she did not feel that it would be delicate to search into a history about which he seemed to feel the greatest reserve. Mr. Colville continued unwell, and, being confined to the house, had occupied his wife's time so entirely that she had not, according to her usual custom, shared in Clara's cares at the "Anchor."

It was partly owing to this circumstance and to the stillness which was enjoined as essential to the invalid,

that no mention of her name had been made before Arnold.

At last the medical attendant stated it to be his opinion that his patient might bear the journey to London, about which he expressed so much anxiety ; but annexed a condition to his permission, and that was, that he should go out every day for a short drive, or stroll a little on the beach before he undertook the greater exertion. One week was accorded to this preparation, and sometimes Clara, whom the old man revered as a "superior being, lent like an angel to earth," helped to guide his feeble steps.

One day "Miss Aubrey," borne in her nurse's arms, appeared upon the scene, and Mr. Arnold was graciously permitted to look at the veiled beauty.

Pheemy was told by him that "she might well be proud of her burden, for that in no part of the whole world could a lovelier young lady be seen."

"Is she considered like Lady Aubrey?" was one of the last questions put ; when the nurse answers—

"No, Sir ; Miss Aubrey is thought to have a great look of her grandmamma, Mrs. Colville, and some people say of Mr. Colville."

"Mr. Colville !" And the listener tottered, and would have fallen to the ground if the man who was in attendance on his young master and the donkey had not interposed a strong arm and saved him.

After this sudden faintness and proof that Mr. Arnold's strength was at so low an ebb, he was compelled to keep perfectly quiet for some days, and not even allowed to talk to Lady Aubrey, although he seemed eager to do so.

"Such a curious change has come over my poor patient," she said one evening; "hitherto he has been so silent, and now he is always wanting to speak to me, he says, and asks for a private interview with papa: I really think we must let him come here the first day he is strong enough. He is very mysterious in his manner; but there is evidently something on his mind, and we must indulge him."

"You say his name is Arnold," was Mr. Colville's reply: "I never heard it that I am aware of, although, to be sure, business matters in past days may have brought me in contact with some one bearing it."

## CHAPTER XXI.

"Cast thy bread on the waters, and after many days it shall come to thee again."

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"If you are equal to the fatigue of seeing a visitor, I wish, dear papa, that you would admit my old man to-day: he pleads very hard for the permission, and I promised to ask you," said Lady Aubrey to her father.

"I should be quite ready to receive him if he came in the afternoon."

Accordingly Mr. Arnold was announced to Mr. Colville, who had desired that he might be shown into the little library which he generally occupied late in the day.

There was no sign of recognition in Mr. Colville's manner, but much embarrassment was evidenced by the visitor, who seemed hardly able at first to command his voice enough to reply to the casual observations about the weather, &c., made by the former.

Mr. Arnold had brought with him a black box, like those generally used for despatches and private papers, which looked so alarmingly like business that Mr. Colville was on the point of saying—

"I am afraid my head is hardly strong enough for work," when the visitor, having overcome his agitation, addressed him with the words, "Sir, I have been anxious for some time to be allowed to speak to you in private. I have an important mission to fulfil. This box (laying his hand on it) contains documents of great value to you."

"Of value to me?"

Mr. Arnold went on with—"I had an opportunity of relieving a countryman from great distress some months ago, when I was resident in New York, and this circumstance created an intimacy between myself and the sufferer. He died after a short illness, and on his deathbed extorted a promise from me that I would have these papers safely committed to your hands. I am now fulfilling the trust reposed in me by handing them over to you in person."

"May I ask the name of your friend?"

"Oh, no *friend* of mine, Sir, although circumstances brought us together: his name was Bullburn."

"Bullburn?" exclaimed Mr. Colville.

"He was head cashier for many years in your banking-house."

"He was. And is he dead?—gone to his great account?" This was said in a tone which expressed great emotion. "Poor fellow! he had been a faithful clerk in my father's house for many years, and

had, as I then believed, the strongest claims on my own confidence; I trusted him as if he had been my brother. He fell! I hardly dare to think of it. You say he wished me to see the contents of this box: have you any idea to what the papers refer?"

"I understood from him that they were bonds and securities of great importance; and other papers which would enable you to claim a very large sum of money; '*restitution*' was the word always on his lips, and *remorse* was the burden on his soul."

Mr. Colville did not speak for some minutes; he seemed deeply affected: tears were flowing down his face, and his hands shook with a tremor which he could not conceal when he took the packets placed before him.

Arnold went on—"If ever a being was truly contrite, that dying man was. 'Deep repentance will be accepted by my God, and He will not despise the sighings of my heart. The mediation of my Saviour, His intercessions, His atonement for my sins, will save me,' he used to say; 'but I cannot die in peace; my agony of mind (and my God alone knows how great *that* has been) cannot abate till I have restored all I can to my employers.' He gave me minute instructions, and extorted from me a solemn promise that I would carry into execution his last desires. He sank into a state of apathy after my last interview with

him, and died that night. He had written to you, he said; you will find the letter in the box."

"I had forgiven him long ago," said Mr. Colville; "I trust that he felt assured of that."

"His words to me were, when speaking of you, Sir, 'That man was my benefactor and my friend: even whilst I yielded to temptation and defrauded him in the dastardly way I did, I honoured and revered him more than any man on earth. I worshipped his noble nature—the very greatness which led him to place implicit confidence in me, and *used* to feel that to serve him or his I would yield my very life. I know that in his great soul there is no bitterness towards me individually; I feel that my first cry to him for pardon would be heard, and that when he hears of my death and reads my letter, he will yield me full forgiveness; tell him so if you live to see him.' And now, Sir," said Arnold, rising, "I cannot trust myself with more to-day, but I must humbly request one more interview with you at your earliest convenience."

"To-morrow, then, at three. I am, as you may imagine, a good deal overcome by your communication, and I am still feeble after recent illness. You have yourself occupied our minds very much; your providential escape, your comparative restoration to health—although you still seem far from well—and,

in fact, all my daughter has told us of you, has interested us very deeply; I trust this visit to me will not prove to have been too much for you. God bless you!"

The old man rose and retired, promising to be punctual the next day.

The feelings excited by Mr. Colville's communication with his family were very deep and very overpowering. Those who had shared together so much care, who had known the sudden reverse from wealth and ease to disquietude and anxiety, could not see the current of events change as it now did without being penetrated with the profoundest, the most fervent sense of what they owed to the Great Dispenser of all. So absorbing was this feeling, that they could hardly find words to utter their thoughts, and expressed their sympathy with each other more in looks and short ejaculations than by sentences.

We can understand this: the full heart cannot always find relief in language.

That the parents offered up the boundless gratitude which swelled in theirs, and that their children knelt too in deepest adoration, we who know the tenor of their minds and lives cannot doubt.

Clara expressed a good deal of anxiety about her dear old man, and proposed going to see him after breakfast, in order to find out whether he was fit for

another visit; for Mr. Colville had repeated more than once, "I never saw any one so agitated as he was once or twice; and when he asked me to let him come again, he looked dreadfully pale: I think he is still very frail and weak."

Sir Edgar found on examination that the bonds and securities which have been alluded to were, indeed, of the greatest importance, and that full restitution had been made, in addition to a clear statement of debts owing to Mr. Colville, which, if recovered, would put him into possession of his former wealth.

And now they were exposed to the perils of prosperity. "The uses of adversity" they had proved to the world; purified from earthly dross had they come out of *that* furnace. We must earnestly hope that in the sunshine which is now bursting on them they will retain their power to gaze steadily on the brightness which can never fade, and that they will never lose sight of the "*prize* of their high calling," dazzling as this world's glare is sure to be, when they again take their stand in it.

Mr. Arnold's first words to Mr. Colville the next day were, "I see, Sir, that you do not remember me; it is long since we met, nearly twenty-five years have passed, and I cannot wonder."

"I confess," replied the latter, "that although

there is a sort of vague recollection of your voice and manner floating in my mind, I do not remember your name; and as it is so long since we met, you must, like myself, be altered in person; I hope you will therefore excuse my forgetfulness."

"*I am changed, indeed!*" said the other; "time and sorrow have marked their pressure on me. *I knew you at once, Sir.*"

"I have seen so many different persons in my day, so many have transacted business matters with me, and then never crossed my path again: I only feel more and more how good *you* are not to forget me in turn."

"Forget you! *you* who saved me from misery, who gave me back more than life itself—*you* who shielded me from the greatest evil which ever befel me, who came to my aid when all other men on earth would have deserted me; you to whom I owe all I possess in the world, my benefactor, my preserver! Forget you! Ah, Sir, you little know"—And the old man wept. Mr. Colville did not interrupt him, but looked bewildered, and assumed the expression which a man wears when he is trying to search into the mazes of the past, and in the chaotic confusion of that past to discover what he feels he ought to recollect.

"Do you remember the name of Arundel? George Arundel?"

“I do ; but that name is associated in my memory with circumstances of a peculiarly secret nature : I have never breathed even the name to any man. You must excuse me, the matter was one entirely between myself and the individual most concerned ; I would rather not revert to it.”

“Always the same ! The noblest, the greatest, the most honourable of men ! Exalted by your high-mindedness far above all others. Oh ! pardon me, Sir, but a trusting heart must find utterance. I am George Arundel !”

“God bless me !—Arundel !”

“I am, indeed ! I am the man whose life would have been blasted, excepting for your mercy : for if you had not sheltered my poor brother’s name, if you had not saved him from detection, from disgrace, I should have sunk prematurely into the grave. He was more to me than life, dearer to me far than all else on earth ; I had none other to love ; and”—but the choked voice could utter no more ; he seemed convulsed with agitation.

“My friend, my long-lost friend, upright, excellent George Arundel ! To have found you again is, indeed, a joy to me ; but I greatly fear that sorrow has filled your own cup to overflowing, and that the little I was able to do for you could not have saved you from afflictions which it is bitter to look back

on. Compose yourself, my friend: I hardly dare to ask you after poor Rupert; is he yet alive?"

"He was taken from me four years ago. He lived to shed peace and comfort on my latter days; he lived to bless you with his latest breath, and to arrange with me the plans which have been our dearest wish, our strongest earthly desire for long, and to fulfil which I have returned to my native land. My brother died possessed of great wealth, I also have almost boundless riches at my disposal. I remained after Rupert died with but one object, and that was to collect those riches together. I want but little; I am tottering on the brink of the grave; your angel daughter saved my life a second time. Oh! Sir; does it not seem most marvellous, most striking, that to *you* and *yours* I owe all? And can you wonder that my sense of the long-suffering mercy and goodness of Him Who is the Ruler and Disposer of all events is so overpowering—that I have for years felt that if He would only grant me life to see you again, and to place all He has given me into your hands, I could die in perfect peace? But one boon more I have to crave, and that is your acceptance of all the wealth which, in our hearts, we dedicated to you from the first. We had no other view in life, I have none other in the close of that life, and on you I again cast myself for all I desire."

Mr. Colville seemed as if he could not articulate a word. George Arundel went on.

“From the first day on which we heard that ‘the house of Colville had stopped payment,’ we determined to repair the evil you had suffered; we did not know of Sir Edgar Aubrey’s connection, and consequent involvement with you; all we knew was that you needed what we could bestow; and to lay that at your feet was the united and continual craving of our hearts. Will you see me to-morrow? This has been an agitating scene for us both; you can now understand how much so it must have been to me, from the moment in which I discovered that Providence had brought me so near you and the fulfilment of our wishes, and that I also found that the angel of mercy who tended me when my very life was fast ebbing away, who restored me through her care to the state I am now in, was your child! My eventful life is, indeed, closing with peace and contentment: my mission is near its issue. Farewell till to-morrow!”

## CHAPTER XXII.

" A poor man served by thee shall make thee rich :  
An old man helped by thee shall make thee strong :  
Thou shalt be served thyself, by every sense  
Of service which thou renderest."

E. BARRETT BROWNING.

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To enable us to sympathize with and to understand the feelings of the two persons to whom we have just listened we must make a retrospect, and go back to a scene which occurred twenty-five years ago.

There was a strongly-contested election going on at the time, political feeling ran high, and at no period were the pulses of Tories and Whigs (*Conservative* is a comparatively new designation as applied to the former) beating with more vitality—at one moment accelerated, at another depressed—than at the one we recur to. Mr. Colville was very anxious about the result, and, contrary to his usual custom, remained on the 20th of that month in his banking-house for more than an hour after the clerks, &c. had left it.

There were no electric telegraphs in those days, flying through the air, conveying words of deepest

import hundreds of miles in so many seconds. The anxious and expectant bounded their eagerness by the speed of horses, wheels, or less speedy messengers, and Mr. Colville had said—

“I will wait here for the last news from the committee-room. You may all go: only tell the porters to be at their post till I leave the house.”

Bullburn had lingered the longest, shutting up one folio, opening another; arranging and re-arranging, looking backwards and forwards, and going through all the evolutions of an unsettled man, eager to be off, yet uncertain whether he ought to start or not.

“Do not linger on my account, Bullburn; I know you are dying to be on your horse: never mind me, I am very comfortable; the issue of the contest will be known in about an hour. I can wait very patiently.”

The cashier retired. Mr. Colville took up the newspaper which he had just laid down, looked at it for some time, and then put it aside for a pamphlet, which, in a few minutes, seemed to absorb his attention.

Presently he heard a footstep; not an eager, joyous one; not one swift in its impulse to bear good tidings, but a feeble, uncertain, hesitating tread. The green door opened slowly. Mr. Colville, without looking up, at once exclaimed, impressed by the

natural conviction that it must be so, "Then it's all over with him; I know it by your step."

"Oh! for mercy's sake, do not say so! My God! in Thy compassion help me:"—and George Arundel, pale and haggard, staggered forward.

"Arundel, my good fellow, what is the matter? You look half-dead; what is it? I am waiting here to learn the result of the election; I took you for the messenger from B——'s committee."

"And," stammered Arundel, "I have come to you on a matter of life and death! The porter told me you were alone; are you sure that no one can overhear us?"

"Quite sure: what is it that alarms you, that agitates you? Sit down."

The poor man was trembling, and seemed ready to sink.

"I have just discovered what it nearly costs me my life to reveal. Will *you* promise mercy? That is what I come to implore. Will you listen patiently? It is a sad tale to tell, a hard matter for me to impeach my own brother."

"What, Rupert? What can *he* have done?"

"He has forged my name, and has drawn from your hands all that I possess. Ruin to myself—and it is utter ruin—I can bear; it is the terror of the law to which he is exposed that I tremble under; I

am willing to beggar myself; it is not *that* that agonizes me—it is the horror of the consequences to him, my poor Rupert, my almost more than brother; for he has been in my eyes like a son ever since we lost my father.”

“Yes, I know what devotion and affection yours has been, but explain to me what proofs have you that he has committed the act you allude to?”

“He has absconded from his office. You know he was in G——’s house—the mercantile house; he has not been heard of for two days: that was the first thing which alarmed me; he has always hated the work. He wanted to go into the army, but my father was inflexible; he placed him at G——’s, and he has never been absent without leave before. He could imitate every sort of writing, every hand under the sun. I have often told him, in joke, what a dangerous talent I thought it. (Excuse my unconnected way of coming to facts.) Not an hour ago I found amongst papers which he had in his haste forgotten to destroy, although he had burnt the contents of every other part of his cabinet, a number of copies of cheques signed in my name: the last one he had done over several times, and that was for all that I had in your hands. What I come for now is to discover whether there is any suspicion of the truth amongst your clerks, whether you have any.”

"I had none, I do assure you; I do not apprehend that any one has. I will examine the cheque-books for to-day; but you say he went yesterday."

"I suspect he did; all I know is that he is gone. I found part of a letter to myself, in which he takes a final leave of me."

Mr. Colville looked carefully, ascertained the required information, and, with an expression of the deepest concern, said—

"Your account has been overdrawn by nearly three hundred pounds; you could not be aware of *that*?"

"Not the most distant idea of it ever entered my mind."

"Here are the cheques which have been cashed during the last month."

They were all forgeries!

Arundel had not power to utter a word: he looked as if he were fainting. Mr. Colville put water to his lips, admitted air from the window, loosened his cravat for him, and then said—

"My poor friend, as far as *I* am concerned, be at peace. I will not prosecute; but no rumour of this shocking event must get abroad."

"May the Almighty reward you!"

"The whole business must be kept secret: you will promise that?"

"I will, indeed, most solemnly, most thankfully; but to replace the money—what shall I do?"

"It is a matter entirely *private*, between you and me: I will replace the sum."

"The whole of it?"

"The whole."

Arundel fell on his knees, and with tears streaming from his uplifted eyes, communed with the Father of Mercies.

There was a pause of a few minutes, and then Mr. Colville resumed—

"I knew and honoured your parents, your gentle mother, your stern but good father. I knew that when you lost that mother, you became, from your own sense of duty, responsible for your brother's training; that he was neglected by all others. I thought him a youth of spotless probity; but we do not know what temptations beset him, poor young creature; if we did, we might pity more than blame him. I feel for you from the bottom of my heart; go home now. I will call on you to-morrow; I will think of what can be done for you. You must be cautious how you try to trace your brother: of course you wish to do that. I trust there is no more to discover, nothing beyond my powers of redressing. Go now; rely on me."

We must, in as few words as possible, sum up the events which followed.

The fugitive was traced to Liverpool; he had taken his passage for New York. The forgeries were hushed up. Nothing else transpired against him. The elder brother sold everything he possessed, and realized three hundred pounds, which he took to Mr. Colville, who declined accepting it, and added another two hundred pounds, to enable his friend Arundel, as he styled him, to begin life again in another country: he added—

“If you are ever a rich man, you can repay me.”

The brothers met in a foreign land; the younger repentant; and with energy and ability to labour, by degrees he gained a position of trust and importance. The capital of the brothers was soon doubled, then tripled: prosperity followed their steps.

Rupert married the only child of the rich banker M——, at Williamsport, trod a path of usefulness and unblemished integrity, inherited through his wife the vast wealth of her father, and after her death lived entirely, till his own health failed him, at the same settlement as his brother. To that brother he left all that he possessed. His antecedents were known to none excepting his brother and his own conscience.

He *proved* his contrition by a new life; and under the name of Arnold, which they adopted immediately

on crossing the Atlantic, they lived a life of beneficence to others, whilst from their hearts—humbled in Rupert's case by the past, elevated in both by the discipline of life, they acknowledged—

“That goodness and mercy had followed them all their days.”

We have little more to add but that George Arundel was permitted to pass his remaining days with the family on whom he had bestowed all he had to give, and who cherished the remnant of strength still left him with the greatest affection. Clara was to him “even as a daughter,” and soothed him under the bodily ills which could not be shaken off at his advanced age till he closed his eventful life in perfect peace.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

“ O ! it is sweet, 'tis passing sweet,  
The sons of woe with love to greet ;  
To whisper, Brother, calm thy sorrow,  
Look forward to a brighter morrow ;  
Meanwhile what cheering aid I can,  
I yield to thee, my fellow man,  
And solace as I solace may  
Thee in the nipping hailstorm day.”

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CLARA and her family had been settled at the Hermitage for nearly a year before Mr. Arundel, who, as we have seen, made one of that home circle, was taken from them. Almost immediately after the disclosures made by the latter, both Sir Edgar and Mr. Colville had begun a search, which they continued with unremitting labour.

They were anxious to discover whether he had any relations to whom his wealth would be an object, and for whom he ought to provide ; but they could trace no claimants. His father's family would be extinct at his own death, and his mother's had long ceased to hold a place in this world. She had been an only child, and from the fact of very early separation from the few distant connections she had, was known to no one by her maiden name.

The next endeavour of those who were so unexpectedly offered such enormous wealth (for Mr. Arundel's was almost beyond calculation) was to place before him every public claim as well as every private one which could tempt him to divert that wealth into other channels. He gave liberally under their guidance, relieved every case brought before him, alleviated distress, softened sorrow, and soothed the suffering. "Freely he had received, freely he gave."

At his death Mr. Colville and his daughter inherited the immense fortune alluded to; and deeply indeed did they feel their increased responsibilities.

Before Clara left the home at Westport she had marked her "luminous course" by deeds of charity, which we have no space to record; and now that she was again placed in the position she had before held, she sought and found strength to walk in the way which in her own experience she had proved to be the most conducive to happiness.

She was a happy being, rejoicing with intense delight in the power of doing good—jealous in her continual watchfulness over herself, lest she should be tempted to forget, in the brilliancy of the present, what she had learnt whilst under the shadows of the past, and gratefully appreciating the enjoyments which to her nature were so dear, and which for a season she had been forced to relinquish.

We do not mean to describe our dear Clara as a being "too bright or good for human nature's daily food;" for lovely as she was in her disposition, she was an impulsive creature, and therefore it was of especial moment to herself and others that those impulses should be perfect.

She had seen enough of the hollowness of the world and its denizens to be able to detect it; she had traced some of the delusions of her early days to their source, and found that she had trusted with too willing a spirit to the seeming purity of such sources. But it was not to *worldly wisdom* that she owed her present power of discerning between good and evil; she had found her treasure in heaven, and there her heart was fixed: illusions had passed away. She had seen too much and felt too keenly to forget that *this* was "not to be her resting-place," and her strongest hopes and desires were placed beyond it. The hours she had spent by the deathbed of George Arundel had matured her mind and attuned her soul to better interests than all this world can give; she saw things as they were—realities came before her in a more vivid light. She was a *practically* religious character, and as such we may well apply the following words to her:—

"Nor did she seek to rise  
To rank, or wealth, or power, on earth:  
Such things to one are little worth  
Whose hope is in the skies."

Thus henceforward there was a dignity in her goodness which invested her with increased influence over all others.

It was only to be expected that the reappearance of such a star as Lady Aubrey would be hailed with delight: the halo cast around her by such wealth as was now her portion, such beauty and fascination, was seen and acknowledged by all. Some persons were very demonstrative, others more than ever emphatic in their manner of again addressing her as their "dear" Lady Aubrey, whilst the adulations of the world in general became almost more than she could endure with patience. At first she only smiled and acknowledged, in her own graceful way, the courtesy and *apparent* kindness of all; but when her time, and, as she acknowledged to Mr. de Vere, "her very peace of mind" was intruded on, she felt quite overpowered, and with increased eagerness bent her thoughts to the object which was once more the dominant one with Sir Edgar.

Vale Aubrey was to be sold! and although they had believed themselves at one time almost indifferent as to its repossession, they were delighted to hear all that their kind friends the Capels had learnt about the disposal of the property.

During the visit paid by the party from the Raven's Nest to Holte Castle, Sir Edgar had refrained as

much as possible from going into the neighbourhood of his ancestral hall. "I am afraid of wishing even for what is denied to me, and I never ride that way if I can help it," had been his reply to Mr. Colville one day when he asked him if the place was looking well ?

Clara felt how delightful it would be to see him in such a home, and how far more congenial also to her own tastes and views to concentrate her interests into that sphere which it was now she felt the will of Providence to place them in.

Mrs. de Vere, who was still her counsellor and most influential friend, strongly advised the projected step. "Every one who really cared for them," as Clara said, "saw how much better it would be for them to be fixed in such a home, and in a few months they had the supreme satisfaction of knowing that it was their own.

Ceaselessly had they both pursued the great purpose for which they felt they were again endowed with wealth, and already they were reaping a rich harvest.

It is impossible to enumerate the deeds of charity, the instances of benevolence, the boundless good they did : it was a blessed privilege.

Into many a private home where privation had been the most striking feature—where comforts were few, but where "patience" had done its "perfect work"—they brought gladness and consolation.

Through the clergy, those especial emissaries of mercy, they did more than any private individuals we have ever heard of, and in every case with such delicacy and judgment—such surpassing tact and real kindness—that it was to all who were thus employed as messengers of mercy the most delightful mission.

And here a general remark on the *increased* benefit which is conveyed through the channel of the clergy is admissible.

Who can so well know the need of the distressed as those who are always ministering to them? Who can so well point out the worthy, as well as the really necessitous, as those whose peculiar call it is to watch, like good shepherds, over the flocks committed to their charge? Who can better judge of the way in which aid ought to be administered than those to whom the cry of the needy is addressed in the hours of direst misery, and who confide their craving wretchedness to the only being who would perhaps listen to the recital? Ask the pious, whose hearts are in their holy work, if they are not thankful to have their hands strengthened and their means of soothing the wretched increased by the liberal and the wealthy, who could not from their own imperfect *personal* knowledge do what is absolutely required, and who, therefore, ought to be deeply grateful for the power of ministering to their poor brethren through such an agency?

Ask the wives and the daughters of the clergy—those sisters of mercy in whom this land so rejoices—if it is not to them the greatest pang that in their gentle course they are exposed to, to feel that they can do so little, because their means are so limited? Ask those who are placed in spheres where their names and influence are known, and they will tell you that their very hearts are sick, and that their spirits “faint within them,” because they *cannot*, with all their self-denial, all their own individual practical abstinence from the very expenses which they are (in keeping with their birth and position) expected to indulge in, do a hundredth part of what they desire to effect. If you could read the appeals addressed to them from every quarter, public as well as private, you would understand this, and that to lessen the deep responsibilities of your own stewardship is indeed a privilege not to be neglected.

Sir Edgar and Lady Aubrey fully acknowledged this, and, whilst they rejoiced in such deputies, experienced peace and a freedom from disquietude which they could not otherwise have known. Numbers were comforted, many were supported by their *unknown* benefactors. The Bernards, who still lived at R——, did not know who bestowed on them a regular income, paid punctually and quarterly: that Sir Edgar, whose patronage was now considerable, had gained appointments for the sons, and a place of little labour

for the father, they did know; but they never could trace their *secret* benefactor.

And this was, as we have said before, only one of many similar acts.

Mrs. de Vere's sympathy with her friends in their joys was "passing show;" she rejoiced under the rays of gladness which emanated from them to others with a feeling too deep for expression.

Mrs. Spencer, "that good, zealous, indefatigable friend of the sorrowful and needy," as Clara called her, was a great comfort to her: "I feel so safe, so sure that good is done, when she is my ambassadress—so contented and so thankful that I have such a friend to help me in this duty."

At Vale Aubrey the atmosphere seemed full of goodness, and *enchanting* and *enchanted* was the hostess.

What a bright, joyous creature she looked, surrounded by her parents, her husband, her Edgar the lesser, and the exquisitely-engaging little Eleanor!

The blush Rosebuds were in their proper element when twining themselves round that group, and Lord Acton doubly enjoyed his frequent sojourns at Holte Castle now that the Aubreys were once more invested with their rights.

Then "nothing on earth," the Duchess of B—— said, "made her so perfectly happy as being in such

a scene—the home circle so beautiful, everything so delightful.”

Lady Mary and Clara carried out *all their* schemes about schools, picturesque school-houses, flower-gardens, &c. &c.

Lord and Lady Bromley brought their sons and the beautiful Edith and Beatrice to visit their dearest friends—those whom they had so honoured and esteemed whilst the clouds of adversity hung over them, and with whom they now so entirely sympathized and rejoiced !

It did Miss Ashton good, softened down the incongruities of her mind and manner—for she had a kind heart concealed under her assumed callousness—and the Duchess declared “ that she could look at her and listen to her now without *always* remembering the lines—

‘ A small unkindness is a great offence :  
Large bounties to bestow we seldom gain,  
But all may shun the guilt of giving pain.’ ”

And actually invited her (a thing she used to say nothing would ever induce her to do) to pass a week with her in town when *the* event of that week was to be the presentation at Court of the lovely débutantes Edith and Beatrice ; and Lady Aubrey was to be at the drawing-room in a train something like the one she had once designed and counterordered.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

"There is, perhaps, if our finite sense could but fully realise it, no nobler training than that which leads a man to transfer all hope from the *here* to the *hereafter*."

C. L.

WE have listened to this wailing cry of "What shall I do?" and in a few cases have been permitted to rejoice in the answer given, the succour granted. Yet to many what a void the echo of the question has brought!

To the young, whose early joys have been clouded by the pressure of misfortune, who from the very depths of their fresh warm hearts have sympathized with their elders, whose bright but brief illusions are over, as far as the anticipated pleasures of this life are concerned, there is still youth and its elasticity, hope and its upraised pinions to bear them forward. They do not shrink from the conflict which as yet they have not been engaged in. Their own experience has taught them nothing but that prosperity is pleasant, and adversity the reverse. There is a sort of intuitive faith in their nature, which leads them to expect brighter days, and encourages them in the dawn of life "to hope all things." As time wears on

they feel stronger, more able to press forward ; and with "noble longings for the strife," they willingly step forth to show what *for others* they can bear, what achieve in the approaching struggle. Tears may mingle with their smiles, but their eyes are not so dimmed by them that they cannot gaze on the long vista of life before them ; they have hardly yet realized the vicissitudes which the more experienced paint in such touching hues ; with youth and vigour on their side, they may even transmute "iron into gold," and live to take a high stand amongst their fellow-men. And who would check their aspirations ? "It is a narrow way," the long-tried weary traveller tells them, and oft, indeed, it is a very rugged road to the unwary, who have not the power of Midas to dispel the difficulties which surround them : with *that* wand they might surmount them all. Alas ! alas ! the want of wealth sadly obstructs their path ! Still there is hope—bright, beaming hope ! The next impulse of their natures is *trust* ; and what an impetus *that* gives to their actions ! No, it is not for the young we feel so much.

For the travellers who have reached the midway course, and already are well nigh sinking under the burden of the day, it is very different : they *know* what is before them ; imagination does not beguile them ; they have seen and felt enough in their own

persons. Sometimes amid the tumult and strife on the battle plain they have been called on to bind, to heal, to strengthen others, and they cannot shut their eyes on what may be their own portion. Greater evils than any they have yet known may fall on them, but they will remember who even careth for the wood-birds, and in whose eyes they are of more value than all the other works of creation; and with spirits purified in the furnace of adversity they will go on in their humble, patient, ever-enduring faith, "shining more and more to the Perfect Day," whilst in *their* progress they will drink often from "the fountain of life."

There are many weeping for those who "are not," and who "will not be comforted;" and there are many, whose desolation we cannot paint, who have lost their "*worldly all*," and who, with the infirmities induced by suffering, are little able to buckle on the armour which will guard them from what it is hard to bear—the world's contempt, and, it may be, its contumely—for true it is, that in proportion to the adulation paid to the great and to the rich, there is an opposite feeling towards the suffering and the impoverished, even although all they have to bear has been brought on them by no fault of their own, and owing to *over trust* in those in whom they confided. Still they need not tremble: "the time is

short ;" and the warriors need not shrink though the battle rages, for they know in Whose hands are its issues, and whose will be the victory : they can join the strife and faint not. To all we say, in reply to the spontaneous and individual cry, "What shall I do ?"—

" O fear not in a world like this,  
And thou shalt know ere long,  
Know how sublime a thing it is  
To suffer and be strong."

THE END.







